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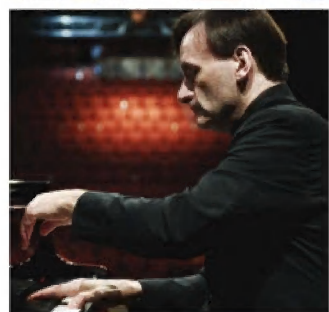
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SOUNDS OF AMERICA

RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 5, Op 67^a; No 7, Op 92^b

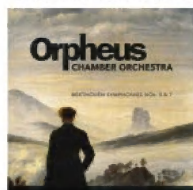
Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra © OCOBEE001

(73' • DDD)

Recorded live at Carnegie Hall, New York,

^bDecember 4, 2010; ^aOctober 11, 2012



The conductorless, entrepreneurial Orpheus Chamber Orchestra launches

a new, 'taking control of its own content' initiative with its first self-produced album, featuring live performances from Carnegie Hall in 2010 and 2012 of two popular Beethoven symphonies in their trademark virtuoso, positive style.

The Seventh in particular shows the creativity-through-collaboration model working at full blend and firing on all cylinders, led by the woodwinds, as captured in Adam Abeshouse's perfectly balanced sound, sporting lovely colours, and amorously in tune. After a lithe *Poco sostenuto*, an exhilarating *Vivace* and a low-key *Allegretto*, the *Presto* finds the Orpheus at their most brilliant yet, uniquely, consolingly tender in the strings before coming out of the Trio. With their bulked-up strings and larger ambitions, the orchestra romp engagingly through the *Allegro con brio* before ending in fierce triumph and pride.

Although the orchestra's interpretative approach – encouraging each player or section to connect better with the moment, the audience and within the ensemble itself – is a benefit of going without a baton, there can be a trade-off to this liberalising of the ensemble process in the form of a tendency towards the security of a square, metrical pulse, which in fact occasionally impedes momentum in the Fifth Symphony. But this Fifth also yields special Beethovenian pleasures, including an unexpectedly touching moment at the end of the first movement when the iconic opening bars return, phrased precisely in the idiosyncratic way they began, and some unforgettably poignant singing by the bassoon in the *Andante con moto*. **Laurence Vittes**

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Brian Noyes

The Welsh composer on his tribute to the poet John Clare

Your 'Journeys After...' trilogy was inspired by 19th-century English poet John Clare...

I saw a programme on him and it struck me that here was this chap who was a farm labourer and yet driven to write poetry. When we think of the Romantics we think of Wordsworth and Byron, but they had a leg up into the public world; Clare had to fight for it.

You were drawn to 'Journey out of Essex'...

Clare had been sent to an asylum in Epping Forest – he wasn't deranged but there was a conflict between his real life and the world he imagined. After he fled the asylum, he wrote this account of his 80-mile journey home.

We hear 'Points of decision' first...

I wanted to reproduce what Clare was feeling as he was contemplating leaving the asylum – fear, trepidation, elation – in musical terms. The solo violin is significant because Clare



himself was a violinist. Also, in his written account, he says he was whistling a tune called *Highland Mary* – I've changed it around a lot, but it's this tune that the violin plays.

'Shadows of Memory' represents Clare's actual journey home...

I endeavoured to portray a feeling of physical tiredness. I came up with some harmony that gets progressively quieter and longer, auralising the idea of slowing down.

What's planned for the third piece?

It will be a lament and I plan to write it next year. After that, I'll lay John Clare to rest.

Brahms

'Brahms by Heart'

String Quartets Nos 1-3.

String Quintet No 2, Op 111^a

Chiara Quartet with ^a**Roger Tapping** *va*

Azica © 2 ACD71289 (139' • DDD)



Does it matter if listeners know that the Chiara Quartet and viola player Roger

Tapping perform the music on their wonderful new recording from memory? The disc's title is 'Brahms by Heart', which hints at the process, if not the results. Perhaps 'Brahms from the Heart' would be more accurate: the performances are suffused with warmth, energy and keen interaction.

Aha, you say! If lines are woven together so seamlessly and everyone breathes as one, this must be a manifestation of the quartet members engaged without the distraction of printed music. Not necessarily. In the end, playing 'by heart' is a crucial matter exclusively for the Chiara, especially since we only hear what they have wrought.

What's important is the fact that the quartet are intimately involved in the three Brahms quartets and Second Quintet, Op 111. Thanks to a superior acoustic space (the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall in Troy, NY) and deft engineering, the musicians are captured in all their sensitive and observant splendour. Tempi are judiciously chosen, inner voices always come through and expressive nuances reflect keen delineation of Brahms's



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MUSIC FOR WIND BAND, VOL. 14

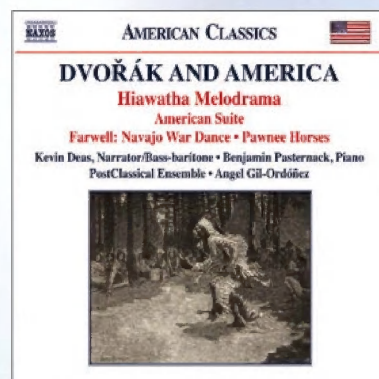
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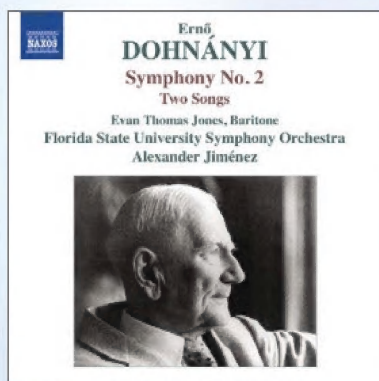
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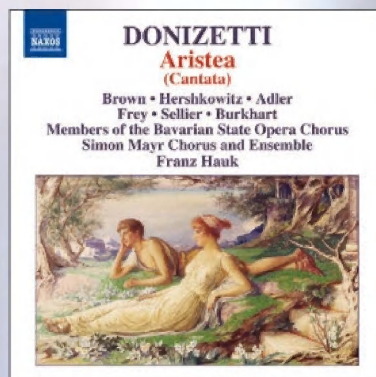
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"splendid dramatic singing"
-MusicWeb International on Andrea Brown



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No maestro required: members of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra 'connect better with the moment' in their new recording of Beethoven symphonies (review on page 1)

markings. Tapping and the Chiara players dive headlong into Op 111, bringing to the entire score a mix of sweeping urgency and poetic flexibility. It is truly something to hear and, with musicians sharing material so closely minus notes before them, must be something to see. **Donald Rosenberg**

Kitzke

Mad Coyote Madly Sings. A Keening Wish. The Animist Child. The Big Gesture. Breath and Bone. We Need to Dream All This Again. The Character of American Sunlight
Jerome Kitzke *voc/toy pf/whistler* **Lisa Karrer** *voc*
Guy Klucevsek *acco* **The Mad Coyote;**
Essential Music / Bradley Lubman
 Innova © INNOVA828 (72' • DDD)
 From Koch International 3-7456-2



Rescued from the obscurity of a 1999 Koch International release and enhanced by a provocative new essay by Kyle Gann, these seven major examples of New York-based composer Jerome Kitzke's work seethe without resolution over his concern with 'the darkness of American human nature', centred most hauntingly but not exclusively in the treatment of Native Americans. Not surprisingly, given Kitzke's often relentless, raucous hammering into our souls about the cruel branding pains of injustice, and his use

of vocal settings of texts ranging from the Lakota Sioux to Allen Ginsberg, the impact is vastly more visceral than intellectual.

Brought to life by Kitzke's Mad Coyote band and friends including reeds, brass, accordion, strings, whistler, four harmonicas and a battery of percussion, each piece comes off as having been combustibly synthesised on the spot at the sessions. There is a lot of abruptly veering off, stopping, starting and going off in different directions at different speeds, like an expanding universe of musical incantations in languages only Kitzke knows, or knew. And while most of the tracks focus narrowly in one respect or another like *The Animist Child*, already a classic on the toy piano circuit, the title-track, *The Character of American Sunlight*, is more broad in scope: pure ethereal sound leads to 14 minutes of complicated musical events that engage good and evil, erupt in screams, and end ambiguously with a casual flourish of harmonicas. The recordings by Judith Sherman, Kitzke and Guy Klucevsek capture not just the sounds but the musical emotion and ambience.

Laurence Vittes

Noyes

'Journeys After...'
 Points of Decision[®]. Shadows of Memory[®]
[®]**Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra, Olomouc / Petr Vronský;** [®]**St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra / Vladimir Lande**
 Navona © NV5938 (44' • DDD)



The Welsh composer Brian Noyes drew inspiration for the works on this disc, 'Journeys After...', from the 19th-century English poet John Clare, who spent many of his final years in mental institutions. The two orchestral scores performed here are part of a trilogy, which will include a piece still to be written.

Like Clare's immersion in the imagination of his mind, Noyes has explored a rich terrain of musical resources to come up with these absorbing works. The composer states in a note that 'the music is in no way programmatic'. But what he has devised certainly goes far in evoking the psychological states and atmospheres Clare may have experienced during his emotional flights.

The longer of the scores, *Points of Decision*, describes Clare's frame of mind just before escaping from the High Beach asylum in Epping Forest, north-east of London. Noyes employs means both subtle and dramatic to capture an effusion of contradictory feelings. The writing is at turns bold, colourful, delicate and other-worldly, with an assortment of percussion providing many salient effects.

Half as long as its predecessor, *Shadows of Memory* is even more impressive, with

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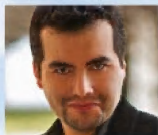
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greater extremes of sonority and telescoping of impassioned events. Noyes savours the possibilities inherent in the orchestral palette as he shapes a cohesive and enveloping narrative.

The performances are sonic pleasures as played by the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra under Petr Vronský (*Points*) and the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra under Vladimir Lande (*Shadows*).

Donald Rosenberg

'Power Players'

'Russian Arias for Bass'

Borodin Prince Igor - There's no sleep, no repose
Glinka A Life for the Tsar - They suspect the truth!
 Ruslan and Lyudmila - Farlaf's Rondo;
 Oh field, field **Mussorgsky** Boris Godunov -
 At Kazan, where long ago I fought; Coronation scene
Prokofiev War and Peace - Majestic, flashing in the sunshine
Rachmaninov Aleko - All the camp is asleep
Rimsky-Korsakov Sadko - Viking Song
Rubinstein The Demon - In the ocean of the sky
Tchaikovsky Iolanta - Oh Lord, have pity on me!

Ildar Abdrazakov bass Kaunas State Choir; Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra / Constantine Orbelian
 Delos © DE3456 (67' • DDD • T/T)



Some singers rush things and others take time growing into roles. One striking

example of the latter is Ildar Abdrazakov, the Russian bass who has excelled most notably in Italian repertoire. But his voice, a lyric instrument, has darkened in recent years to the point where he has begun to inhabit major roles in works of his native land. Abdrazakov brings splendid sonority and nuance to the Russian arias on this disc.

The characters in the cast of this absorbing programme range from tsars and princes to lovers and peasants. The composers are titans of Russian opera – Borodin, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky – who exploit the luxurious and impassioned traits of the bass to the max. To each aria, Abdrazakov applies distinctive touches, keeping his silken voice weighty and penetrating or light and buoyant – whatever the dramatic moment demands.

He is as compelling revelling in long lines, as in Gremin's aria from *Eugene Onegin*, as he is negotiating the tricky patter in Farlaf's Rondo from *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. It is a pleasure to hear Abdrazakov in music not often performed outside Russia, including an aria from Rubinstein's *The Demon*, and in a



Wide orchestral palette: Vladimir Lande conducts the St Petersburg State SO in music by Brian Noyes

role (*Boris Godunov*) he likely will command when he decides he's ready to sing it onstage.

Constantine Orbelian teams vibrantly with Abdrazakov, conducting the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra and Kaunas State Choir in performances that capture the special sound world of these rich excerpts.

Donald Rosenberg

'Underwater Princess Waltz'

'A Collection of One-Page Pieces' by Karl H Berger, Earle Brown, Alvin Curran, Nick & Leo Didkovsky, Joel Ford, Daniel Goode, Clinton McCallum, Larry Polansky and Christian Wolff
 Zwerm and guests
 New World © 80748-2 (62' • DDD)



Here Zwerm interact with printed one-page scores from nine composers of the recent

past and the latter part of the 20th century.

Zwerm's coruscating involvements with composers ranging from old-school classics to newcomers consist of processing with no holds barred, in different configurations and

often with friends, a trending niche genre called 'one-page pieces'. Their realisation of Wolff's meticulously notated *Burdocks*, *Part VII* includes percussion, saxophone, samples of old radio recordings, sine waves and of course guitars. They play Curran's bittersweet waltzes in simple two-guitar arrangements. More extreme is a minute of *Mayhem* created by Nick and Leo Didkovsky, Ford's pulsing *Gauss Cannon* for Zwerm and drums and McCallum's wild solo guitar ride *round round down*. The concluding minimalist stretches of Karl Berger's *Time Goes By* provide 14 minutes of rest.

Zwerm's severe intellectualising of sometimes fanciful physical scores, as detailed in Amy C Beal's delightfully illustrated booklet-note, brings the musician so deeply and intimately into the experience that the results can be considered the composer's intentions with no distinction made between the score, its realisation and 'interpretation'. Theoretically, if you can understand the directions each page provides, even perhaps in a broad conceptual manner, you don't even need the musicians.

Laurence Vittes

An aerial photograph of a roof covered in multi-colored tiles (blue, green, yellow, and grey) arranged in a complex, wavy pattern. Two small dormer windows with white frames and green trim are visible on the roof.

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THE SCENE

Andris Nelsons joins the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, Dudamel leads an all-star Beethoven gala at the Hollywood Bowl, and the Bard Music Festival celebrates the music of Schubert

LENOX, MA

Tanglewood

Andris Nelsons in Boston (July 11, 12, 19, 20)

Conductor Andris Nelsons officially begins his new post as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2014. Over the summer, the maestro makes his first festival appearances at Tanglewood with the orchestra in a series of four concerts. The first is an all-Dvořák programme, including the composer's symphonic poem *The Noonday Witch* and the Violin Concerto with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter. Along with fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center, he leads the orchestra in a gala concert themed around dance, including excerpts from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, with soprano Angela Denoke and mezzo Isabel Leonard as soloists. Another highlight concert features the Swedish trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger performing Trumpet Concerto No 1 by Rolf Martinsson, with other music by Brahms and Tchaikovsky.

bso.org

COOPERSTOWN, NY

Glimmerglass Festival

20th-century opera (July 11 - August 24)

This opera and musical theatre festival makes four selections from last century, with new productions of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*, Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy*. As usual, the festival includes events around the main productions. The legendary soprano Jessye Norman gives a public masterclass on August 8 with members of the festival's Young Artists programme, and director Jonathan Miller will be on hand for a masterclass on July 25. This year's artist-in-residence is the American dramatic soprano Christine Goerke, who not only performs the title-role in *Ariadne* but also gives a concert on August 15, on the stage where her career began 20 years ago.

glimmerglass.org

ATHERTON, CA

Music@Menlo

Around Dvořák (July 18 - August 9)

The San Francisco Bay Area's top chamber music festival celebrates the music of Dvořák. Over the course of eight

EVENT OF THE MONTH



Leon Botstein, president of Bard College and conductor

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY

Bard Music Festival

Schubert and his world (August 8-17)

Since it began 25 years ago, the Bard Music Festival has grown into one of the Hudson Valley's most stimulating music festivals. Thanks in part to its co-founder and co-artistic director Leon Botstein, this summer festival is both intellectually rigorous and entertaining. In this anniversary year, Bard considers Schubert in great depth, with the first weekend, 'The Making of a Romantic Legend', providing context for the composer's early life and career in Vienna, and the second weekend, 'A New Aesthetics of Music', examining his originality, legacy and influence. Of course, all of this adds up to an immersion in the great man's music (and that of his peers) - everything from *Erlkönig* to the late Piano Sonata in A and the Mass in E flat. Pre-concert talks provide opportunities to hear expert commentary.

fishercenter.bard.edu

concert programmes, the event charts the composer's musical influences as well as his legacy. 'Dvořák in Context' looks at the folk idioms that informed him, surrounding Dvořák's String Quartet No 10, Op 51, with works by Mozart, Martinů and Bartók. Other concerts explore his relationship to Viennese, Bohemian and American traditions, with 'American Visions' thrillingly combining works by Gottschalk, Dvořák, Ives and Crumb. A popular series of artist-curated concerts allows guest musicians to continue this exploration.

musicatmenlo.org

LOS ANGELES, CA

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Dudamel and Beethoven (July 22, 24)

The pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet teams up with Renaud (violin) and Gautier Capuçon (cello) to create a power trio to perform Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Gustavo Dudamel leading the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. Following this is Beethoven's Symphony No 5.

hollywoodbowl.com

HIGHLAND PARK, IL

Ravinia Festival

CSO summer residency (July 22 - August 17)

Music director James Conlon leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a variety of concerts during its six-week residency here. An all-Beethoven programme features pianist Jonathan Biss performing the Piano Concerto No 4; an all-Tchaikovsky evening showcases the talents of pianist Denis Matsuev, who plays the composer's much-loved First Piano Concerto. A more eclectic programme includes Hanns Eisler's *Fourteen Ways of Describing the Rain*, performed as an accompaniment to the silent film *Regen*. A gala evening features Joshua Bell in Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1. Another highlight is a concert performance of Strauss's *Salome*, with soprano Patricia Racette in the title-role.

ravinia.org

PARK CITY, UT

Deer Valley Music Festival

Chamber music series (July 23, 31)

The Deer Valley Music Festival is the summer home of the Utah Symphony and the Utah Opera. In addition to symphonic music, the festival offers a chamber series. This year the Muir Quartet, the festival's resident ensemble, celebrates 25 years of its 'Emerging Quartets and Composers' training programme. Created in 1989 by the Muir Quartet and the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Joan Tower, this three-week seminar this year showcases two string quartets (the Friction and Rosco quartets) paired with two young composers (Anthony Suter and Nicholas Chuaqua) to present world premieres.

deervalleymusicfestival.org

Previews by Damian Fowler

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New Berlin Phil label is a defining moment

The Berlin Philharmonic has launched an in-house label: it is, I think, something of a defining moment in the evolution of the classical music recording industry. It isn't the first orchestra to do so – in fact you could argue it's slightly behind the trend here, following on from others such as the London Symphony, San Francisco Symphony and Bavarian Radio Symphony orchestras. But for the mighty Berlin Philharmonic to launch a label of its own turns it from a trend to the new norm.

The BPO's relationship with major labels over the past century has represented the gold standard of recording during the industry's oft-cited glory years. Partly this was through conductor/label relationships – that between Herbert von Karajan and Deutsche Grammophon most notably, though more recently Sir Simon Rattle's tenure led to a fruitful era of releases on EMI Classics. But, as I discussed in this space a few months ago, the link between maestros and labels has changed, with almost no conductor now enjoying the long-term contract with a major label that was once commonplace.

Well, Rattle's contract with EMI (now part of Warner Classics) has come to an end, and the BPO has decided to go it alone. This doesn't mean it will no longer record for other labels, but when it does, such a project will be driven by a star soloist (which occasionally could also include a star conductor), rather than the orchestra and repertoire. When it comes to symphonic literature, it will now appear on the orchestra's own label – beginning with a set of Schumann symphonies. If the BPO's Digital Concert



Martin

Hall is anything to go by, the label should be a stylish and high-end affair (it may be late to launch a label but the BPO has pioneered offering concerts to audiences far and wide through its impressive online home).

But if orchestra own-labels are increasingly the norm, how might this change things for collectors? For a start it might free orchestras from the restraints imposed by commercial considerations. Rattle implied as much when he said: 'The Schumann symphonies have never been considered one of the sure-fire big sellers of all music, but for us in the Berliner Philharmoniker, this music is closer to our hearts than almost any other... So we said, let's share our interpretations with others.' Reading between the lines, this might not have sold enough copies to justify a major label issuing it. But when taken as part of an organisation's wider work, it can become viable.

So perhaps we'll see increasing numbers of orchestral releases which really capture an ensemble's musical soul, enshrining the partnership between players and maestro in repertoire really key to them. Just as we did, en masse, in the early CD era of the '80s of course; and there lies a slight note of caution. The industry's release schedule is only manageable up to a certain size, and part of the cause of that earlier unsustainable bubble is that multiple labels all issued identical repertoire at the same time as each other (sometimes even on the same label). The result: over-supply, and the collectors couldn't keep up. So just because a label can do something, doesn't mean it always should.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



RICHARD LAWRENCE, who has written the Specialist's Guide to one-act operas, says, 'It was only when sitting

down to prepare this article that I realised how many powerful one-act operas there are. The medium should appeal to anyone who frets at the loss of dramatic tension inevitable when a full-length piece is punctuated by intermissions.'



no more strongly,' says **FABRICE FITCH**, who has surveyed the available recordings for this month's *Gramophone* Collection on the work, 'so which recording I'd take to a desert island is a question worth pondering.'



For me, Lassus's *Lagrime di San Pietro* is one of the high points of all Renaissance music, to put it true to itself. Those landmark compositions from the 1990s still sound as fresh and exciting as they did over 20 years ago,' says **PWYLL AP SIÔN**, who has profiled Fitkin for our Contemporary Composers series.

'Graham Fitkin's music ticks all the right boxes for me. It's vibrant, dynamic, powerful and – above all else –

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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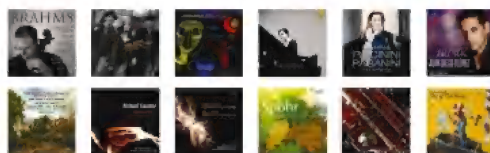
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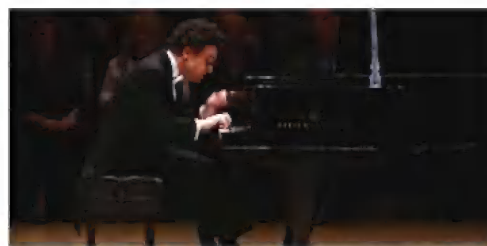
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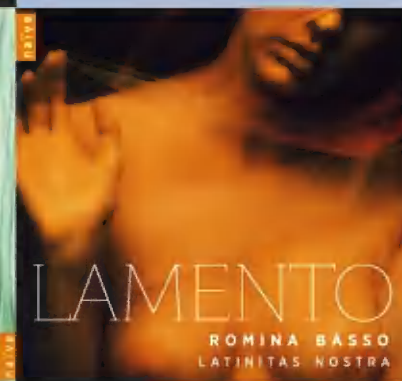
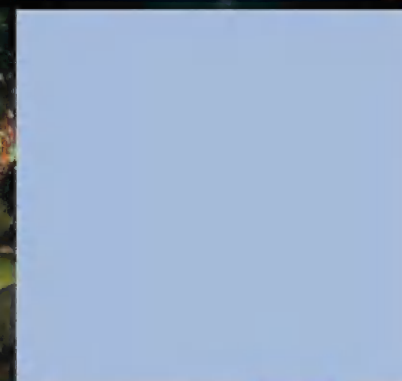
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naïveclassique

SPRING 2014



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NIKOLAI LUGANSKY | SINFONIA VARSOVIA, ALEXANDER VEDERNIKOV **CHOPIN PIANO CONCERTOS**

CHAD HOOPES | MDR LEIPZIG RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, KRISTJAN JÄRVI **MENDELSSOHN, ADAMS VIOLIN CONCERTOS**

ANDERS DAHLIN, SARA MINGARDO, DELPHINE GALOU | ACCADEMIA BIZANTINA, OTTAVIO DANTONE **VIVALDI L'INCORONAZIONE DI DARIO**

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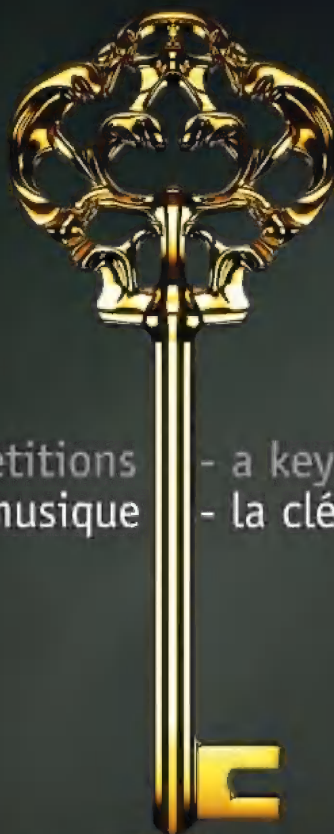
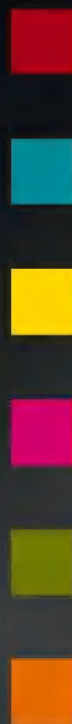
FAZIL SAY | HR-SINFONIEORCHESTER, GIANANDREA NOSEDA **BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTO NO.3, PIANO SONATAS OP.111, NO.14 'MOONLIGHT'**

ROMINA BASSO | LATINITAS NOSTRA **LAMENTO** ROSSI, CARISSIMI, STROZZI, MONTEVERDI, PROVENZALE




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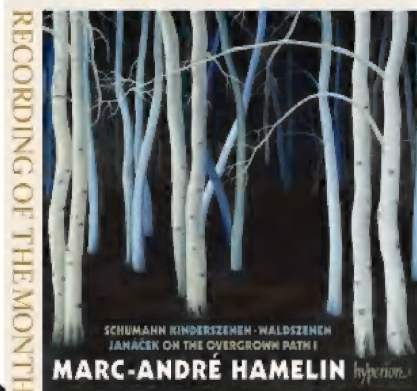


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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford introduces the finest recordings from this month's reviews

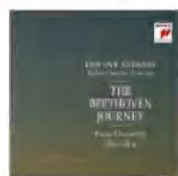


JANÁČEK. SCHUMANN

Piano Works
Marc-André Hamelin *pf*
Hyperion 
CDA68030

► **BRYCE MORRISON'S**
REVIEW IS ON
PAGE 26

In Marc-André Hamelin's musicianship, remarkable virtuosity has long lived alongside the capacity for intimacy and thoughtfulness, something this repertoire reveals quite beautifully.



BEETHOVEN Piano
Concertos Nos 2 and 4
Mahler Chamber Orch /
Leif Ove Andsnes *pf*
Sony Classical 
88883 70548-2

The second disc (the first was a Recording of the Month) of what's proving to be a wonderfully collaborative journey through Beethoven's piano concertos.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 29**



PANUFNIK
'Symphonic Works, Vol 7'
Berlin Konzerthaus
Orch; Polish RSO /
Łukasz Borowicz
CPO  CPO777 686-2

An impressive instalment in CPO's Panufnik symphonic works series, and an important contribution to the composer's centenary year.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



PROKOFIEV
Symphonies Nos 3 and 7
Bournemouth SO /
Kirill Karabits
Onyx  ONYX4137
Kirill Karabits

draws a rich wealth of detail from his players in his exploration of both symphonies – an auspicious start to this full Prokofiev cycle.

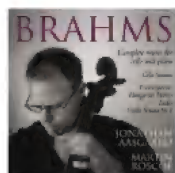
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



SHOSTAKOVICH
Symphony No 14
Gal James *sop* Alexander
Vinogradov *bar* RLPO /
Vasily Petrenko
Naxos  8 573132

The latest instalment in this consistently superb Shostakovich cycle – now on the home straight – is an intense journey through this dark work.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**




BRAHMS
Works for Cello and Piano
Jonathan Aasgaard *vc*
Martin Roscoe *pf*
Avie  ② AV2300
First-class chamber

music from two players – each of whom brings a distinct individuality to the performances – clearly immersed in the repertoire.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 49**



HAYDN
Seven Last Words
Casals Quartet
Harmonia Mundi  HMC90 2162

There's great control here, which only serves to emphasise the work's structure and power and makes for an emotional performance.

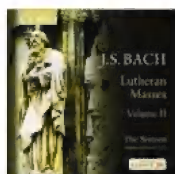
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



MAHAN ESFAHANI
Harpsichord works
by Bach and Byrd
Mahan Esfahani *hpd*
Wigmore Hall Live  M
WHLIVE0066

With an instinctive sense of rhythm and a gift for interpretation, Esfahani has firmly established himself as one of today's most thrilling harpsichordists.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



BACH
'Lutheran Masses, Vol 2'
The Sixteen / Harry
Christophers
Coro  COR16120
A graceful elegance

runs throughout this recording from The Sixteen, with Harry Christophers's direction leaving Bach's music feeling perfectly paced and richly detailed.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**





'LA BELLA PIÙ BELLA'
Songs from Early
Baroque Italy
Roberta Invernizzi *sop*
Craig Marchitelli *archlute*
Glossa  GCD922902

There's a compelling sense of engaged drama – not to mention gloriously characterful singing – in Invernizzi's selection of early-17th-century songs.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**



DVD/BLU-RAY WAGNER

Götterdämmerung
Arthaus  ② 101 696;  ② 108 093
Daniel Barenboim's *Ring* cycle at last year's Proms was a highlight of the season: different forces here, but the same acclaimed interpreter on the podium.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**



REISSUE

LOTTE LEHMANN
125th Birthday Tribute
Music & Arts  ⑤
CD1279

A comprehensive and fascinating exploration of the German soprano's legacy, marking her 125th anniversary. ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**



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FOR THE RECORD



Returning to the fold: Osmo Vänskä has signed a two-year contract with the Minnesota Orchestra

Minnesota Orchestra welcomes the return of Music Director Osmo Vänskä

Osmo Vänskä is to return as Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra, signing a contract for the next two seasons.

Vänskä resigned from the orchestra in October last year, following more than a year of contract disputes between the musicians and management over pay that had led to the entire previous season being cancelled. A contract between players and management was subsequently reached in January, including a 15 per cent cut in salary – something that Vänskä will also accept.

His previous decade as Music Director – a post he took up in 2003 – saw some well-received recordings for the BIS label, including the start of a Sibelius symphony cycle. The release of Symphonies Nos 1 and 4 was awarded an Editor's Choice in our August 2013 issue. Now he's back, perhaps that series will conclude, and the hope must be that the past seven months will be seen as a mere interruption in what's been, musically at least, a very successful partnership.

'I am very pleased to have this chance to rebuild the Vänskä/Minnesota Orchestra partnership,' said the Finnish conductor in a statement, 'and I look

forward to getting back to music-making with the players and together re-establishing our worldwide reputation for artistic excellence.' He will lead the orchestra in a minimum of 10 weeks of concerts each season.

A statement issued by the orchestra quoted the musicians as being 'truly excited by the board's decision to bring back Osmo as Music Director', while the Chairman of the Board, Gordon Sprenger, said: 'We are very happy to be able to reunite Osmo and the orchestra to deliver outstanding musical performances for our community and to extend their celebrated musical partnership. We are delighted he is back.'



Alain Lanceron is named new President of Erato and Warner Classics

Alain Lanceron has been named as the new President of Erato and Warner Classics – the company which includes what was previously the EMI Classics and Virgin Classics labels. A respected veteran of the industry, he was honoured at last year's *Gramophone* Awards with a prize for Special Achievement, when we described him as 'a man of exquisite musical taste'. This month sees him entering our Hall of Fame (see page 19).

Krzysztof Urbanski is offered NDR Symphony Orchestra role

Polish conductor Krzysztof Urbanski has been appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Hamburg-based NDR Symphony Orchestra from the 2015–16 season. He will work alongside Music Director Thomas Hengelbrock to help broaden the orchestra's repertoire and programming, working in Hamburg for up to four weeks per year.

Mariss Jansons bids farewell to Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Conductor Mariss Jansons has announced that he will not be continuing as Chief Conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra beyond the 2014–15 season. A replacement is yet to be announced. Jansons will continue to lead the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Composer John Luther Adams wins Pulitzer Prize for music

John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean* has won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for music. The prize, which amounts to \$10,000, is awarded annually to an American composer for a work premiered during the previous year. The other two nominated pieces were *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* by John Adams (no relation), and *Invisible Cities* by Christopher Cerrone.

Become Ocean was commissioned by the Seattle Symphony and is an evocation of the seas close to the Pacific Northwest of the US. Adams explains the title thus: 'Life on this earth first emerged from the sea, and as the polar

If you include Lanceron's time as director of the classical department of Pathé Marconi-EMI from 1978, he has presided over some 600 recordings, a number of which have secured *Gramophone* Awards. Many of Lanceron's projects have managed to be both musically superb but also commercially successful, whether in core repertoire or intriguing and imaginative 'crossover' projects such as those by Christina Pluhar. According to Warner Music Group, Lanceron will lead the group's 'global classics operations', overseeing A&R and catalogue development. He will remain based in Paris, as he was when President of Virgin Classics and Director of EMI Classics France.



Pullitzer Prize-winner: John Luther Adams

ice melts and the sea level rises, we humans find ourselves facing the prospect that, once again, we may quite literally become ocean.'

Gramophone visits Foyles

As part of the Foyles Grand Opening Festival, *Gramophone's* Editor-in-Chief James Jolly will be in conversation at 4pm with Sir John Eliot Gardiner on June 27 at 7.30pm and Ian Bostridge on June 29. Both musicians will be talking about, and signing, their books and recordings. For more information, visit foyles.co.uk/events

Lloyd Webber puts away his cello

Julian Lloyd Webber has had to give up playing due to a herniated disc in his neck, which has affected his right arm. The British cellist gave his debut concert at Wigmore Hall in 1971 and has recorded for Universal, Sony, EMI and Naxos. More recently, he has become a spokesman for music education. He looks set to continue working in this area, saying 'I would like to use my knowledge to give back as much as I can to the music profession.'

Berlin Philharmonic launches own label with Schumann symphonies

The Berlin Philharmonic has announced the launch of its own record label, Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings.

No stranger to distributing material from its own concerts, the BPO has, since 2008, led the way in how an orchestra can present its own performances through its Digital Concert Hall. The same in-house recording technology will now be used to capture concerts for the new label, which will begin with a Schumann symphony cycle, recorded live in February and November last year under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle.

The BPO is far from the first orchestra to launch its own label – the London Symphony Orchestra's LSO Live has marked its 100th release, while the likes of the San Francisco Symphony and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra have issued notably successful symphonic series on their own imprints.

The Schumann set – which features the earlier, 1841 edition of the Fourth Symphony – will be released on May 23, priced at €49.90. But for that, the collector receives traditional CD-format recordings of the works, plus high-resolution video and audio on a Blu-ray disc, packaged in a linen-bound hard-cover box. Those wanting even higher-resolution sound will be given a code to download a version in up to 192 kHz/24-bit.

Future releases on the label include Bach's *St John Passion*, conducted by Rattle and staged by Peter Sellars (a follow-up to the same partnership's recent *St Matthew Passion* DVD – a *Gramophone* DVD of the month), and a complete cycle of Schubert's symphonies conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt.



The Schumann symphonies from the BPO and Rattle

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PODCASTS

James Jolly speaks to Daniel Hyde (pictured) about his new recording of Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* with Phantasm and the Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford, for Opus Arte.



REVIEWS DATABASE

Featuring more than 30,000 original *Gramophone* reviews (stretching back to 1983) in a fully searchable database complete with comparative recordings, links to retailers and full recording details, this database is the ultimate resource for anyone interested in classical music recordings.

THE GRAMOPHONE PLAYER

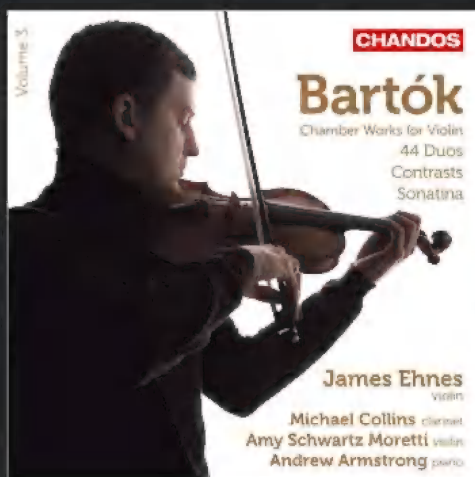
Hear tracks from the month's leading releases, including our Recording of the Month – pianist Marc-André Hamelin's take on piano works by Schumann and Janáček for Hyperion.

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CHANDOS

New Releases



Disc of the Month Bartók

Chamber Works for Violin, Vol. 3

James Ehnes builds on his reputation as a formidable Bartók interpreter with this third disc in his universally praised series devoted to chamber works by the great Hungarian composer. In a diverse programme the *Sonatina* from 1915 is heard together with the eclectic *Forty-four Duos* for two violins and *Contrasts*, a dazzling work full of exuberant virtuosity, in which he is joined by Michael Collins, renowned as one of the world's leading clarinetists.

CHAN 10820



Turina

Orchestral Works, Vol. 2

This is the second release featuring works by Joaquín Turina in Juanjo Mena's ongoing series with the BBC Philharmonic, *La Música de España*. Soprano María Espada stars in *Canto a Sevilla* and Martin Roscoe is the soloist in *Rapsodia sinfónica*. *La procesión del Rocío* and *Danzas gitanas* complete a disc of vibrant works inspired by Turina's native Andalusia.

CHAN 10819



Margaret Fingerhut

Endless Song

Having recently suffered a series of career threatening injuries, pianist Margaret Fingerhut once again finds her 'song'. This album is an eclectic and highly personal collection of song-like encores for piano, featuring, alongside John Metcalf's lyrical title piece, works by Mendelssohn, Liszt, Gershwin, Poulenc, Albéniz, Guastavino, Rachmaninoff, and Suk.

CHAN 10825

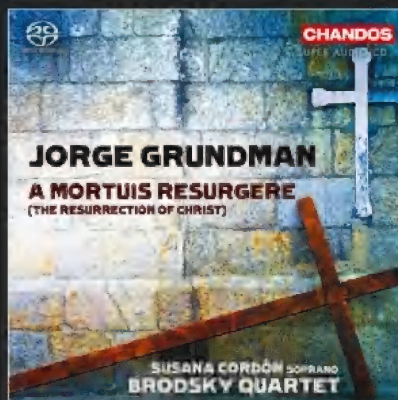


Bach

Six Trio Sonatas

Here Bach's Trio Sonatas BWV 525–530 for organ have been re-imagined in historically informed arrangements for baroque chamber ensemble, made in the spirit of Bach, himself a serial re-arranger of his own works. They are performed by the Tempesta di Mare Chamber Players, an early-music ensemble described by *Fanfare* as 'one of the finest in the world'.

CHAN 0803



Jorge Grundman


A Mortuis Resurgere

The Brodsky Quartet is joined by the soprano Susana Cordon in the premiere recording of the chamber oratorio *A Mortuis Resurgere* by the contemporary Spanish composer Jorge Grundman. Featuring Grundman's trademark contemplative harmonies and expressive writing, this work of remarkable accessibility tells the story of the Resurrection of Christ.

CHSA 5138

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GRAMOPHONE HALL OF FAME

For the third year running, Gramophone has invited readers to vote for the performers, producers, engineers and label executives who have shaped the classical music recording industry. In the following pages you can discover the 25 – including five nominated by us – who we welcome into the Gramophone Hall of Fame, joining the already illustrious list below

Conductors

Claudio Abbado • John Barbirolli • Daniel Barenboim • Thomas Beecham • Leonard Bernstein • Karl Böhm • Pierre Boulez
Adrian Boult • Sergiu Celibidache • Colin Davis • Gustavo Dudamel • Wilhelm Furtwängler • John Eliot Gardiner
Carlo Maria Giulini • Bernard Haitink • Nikolaus Harnoncourt • Mariss Jansons • Herbert von Karajan • Carlos Kleiber
Otto Klemperer • Rafael Kubelik • James Levine • Charles Mackerras • Zubin Mehta • Simon Rattle • Georg Solti • George Szell
Arturo Toscanini • Bruno Walter

Singers

Janet Baker • Cecilia Bartoli • Jussi Björling • Montserrat Caballé • Maria Callas • Enrico Caruso • Joyce DiDonato
Plácido Domingo • Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau • Renée Fleming • Thomas Hampson • Anna Netrebko • Birgit Nilsson
Luciano Pavarotti • Leontyne Price • Elisabeth Schwarzkopf • Joan Sutherland • Bryn Terfel • Fritz Wunderlich

Pianists

Leif Ove Andsnes • Martha Argerich • Claudio Arrau • Vladimir Ashkenazy • Alfred Brendel • Emil Gilels
Glenn Gould • Vladimir Horowitz • Wilhelm Kempff • Lang Lang • Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli • Murray Perahia
Maurizio Pollini • Sergey Rachmaninov • Sviatoslav Richter • Arthur Rubinstein

String/brass/woodwind players

Maurice André • Dennis Brain • Julian Bream • Pablo Casals • Jacqueline du Pré • James Galway • Jascha Heifetz • Heinz Holliger
Steven Isserlis • Yo-Yo Ma • Wynton Marsalis • Albrecht Mayer • Yehudi Menuhin • Anne-Sophie Mutter • David Oistrakh
Emmanuel Pahud • Itzhak Perlman • Jean-Pierre Rampal • Mstislav Rostropovich • Jordi Savall • Andrés Segovia • John Williams

Vocal and instrumental ensembles

Alban Berg Quartet • Amadeus Quartet • Beaux Arts Trio • The King's Singers • Takács Quartet • The Tallis Scholars

Producers/engineers/record label executives

Bernard Coutaz • John Culshaw • Fred Gaisberg • Klaus Heymann • Walter Legge • Goddard Lieberson • Ted Perry
Kenneth Wilkinson

DMITRI HVOROSTOVSKY

(b1962) Baritone

Winning the 1989 Cardiff Singer of the World competition launched Hvorostovsky's career. Debuts at La Scala and Covent Garden followed in 1992 and his reputation was established. He is a highly regarded interpreter of Russian song.

RENÉE FLEMING

I am so pleased that Dmitri Hvorostovsky is to be inducted into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame. Besides being a wonderful colleague, Dmitri possesses a voice with a quality of velvet that is both a joy to hear and immediately recognisable. Dmitri's technique is impeccable – he has the best breath control I've ever encountered. He is a consummate musician. Add to this his charisma and committed portrayals, and you have a complete singing artist.

I was fortunate to be able to sing my only full role from the Russian repertoire, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, with Dmitri in the title-role, and I still regard it as a career high point. Our concerts together in St Petersburg and Moscow were also a delight.

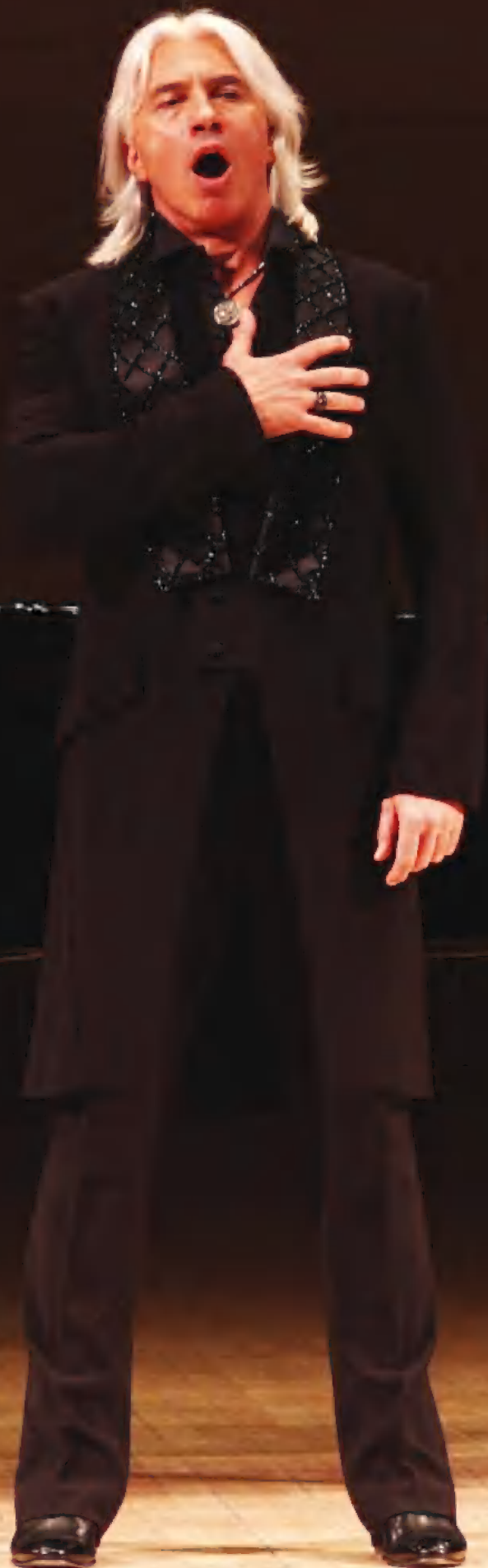
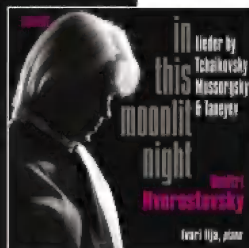
I expect Dmitri's artistry to go on undiminished, in the tradition of other great Verdi baritones, forever.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'In this Moonlit Night'

Dmitri Hvorostovsky bar **Ivari Ilja** pf

Online © ODE1216-2 (4/13)





DINU LIPATTI

(1917-50) Pianist

When Lipatti came second in the Vienna International Piano Competition in 1933, Alfred Cortot resigned from the jury in protest. Lipatti signed an exclusive recording contract with Columbia in 1946 and worked regularly with producer Walter Legge. He gave his final recital in 1950 playing music closest to his heart: Mozart, Bach, Schubert and Chopin.

STEPHEN HOUGH

Dinu Lipatti is a transitional pianist. His tragically short life came at the mid-point of the 20th century, when propeller planes were turning into jets, when crackly 78s were being smoothed into LPs, and, more to the point, when a flamboyant, individualistic, carefree approach to recording and to playing was changing into a modern, clean-clear style.

A 'record' was starting to mean a setting in stone of an interpretation rather than a snapshot of one day at the studio. Glenn Gould took this to its logical conclusion and stopped playing concerts altogether; Lipatti in contrast was playing in public up to the end with the last ounce of his decreasing strength.

Yet among the many gemstones of Lipatti's cherishable output there is one snapshot that seems to me to be among the greatest tracks of recorded history. His performance of Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* is a supreme example of how spontaneity, flair, polish and elegance can meet in a moment of pianistic genius. If its six minutes were the only playing of his surviving it may well secure his place in the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'Icon: Dinu Lipatti - The Master Pianist'

Dinu Lipatti *pf*

Warner Classics © 207318-2

DAME KIRI TE KANAWA

(b1944) Soprano

Kiri Te Kanawa's fame spread beyond the opera world when she performed at the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. She had a particularly close working relationship with Solti and was Gramophone's Artist of the Year in 1992.

ROGER VIGNOLES

Who better to grace a *Gramophone* Hall of Fame than Dame Kiri? Her unique appeal has always lain in the luscious, even-toned beauty of her voice, and the sheer glamour of her stage presence. For many years I was lucky enough to experience both at close quarters, as we toured the world in recitals from New York to Tokyo, from Montreal to Madrid, playing in packed 2000-seater opera houses.

The embodiment of the phrase 'operatic royalty', Kiri could also deliver a first-rate song recital, with never an aria in sight, barring the obligatory final encore – 'O mio babbino caro', or the ineffable 'Chi il bel sogno di Doretta' from Puccini's *La rondine*. Her recital repertoire of course played to her strengths – the most beautiful top G sharp in the business for instance, as displayed to perfection in songs like Liszt's 'Oh! quand je dors' and Duparc's 'Phydilé', or a natural comic talent in Obradors's Spanish songs and Canteloube's *Songs of the Auvergne*.

But as in the opera house, this wonderful Arabella and peerless Marschallin was always at her peak in Richard Strauss, whether the rapt stillness of 'Morgen!', the maternal glee of 'Muttertändelei' or best of all, the barnstorming 'Cäcilie'.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

R Strauss Lieder

Kiri Te Kanawa *sop*

Vienna PO / Sir Georg Solti

Decca Classics ® 430 5112





RICCARDO CHAILLY

(b1953) Conductor

Music Director of Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra and Music Director designate of La Scala, Milan, Chailly is one of today's great conductors. His very broad musical sympathies have been honed with the Berlin RSO (1982-88) and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (1988-2004), and, in the opera house, Bologna's Teatro Comunale (1986-93). He has recorded for Decca since 1982.

JAMES JOLLY

Riccardo Chailly's rise to the very top of his profession is an example to any young conductor: he learned his craft, built his repertoire and mastered the art of developing an ensemble in Berlin with the radio orchestra. Then followed a spell at the head of one of Italy's major opera houses before he stepped on to the podium to head one of the world's finest ensembles, Amsterdam's great Concertgebouw Orchestra, there giving us recorded cycles of Brahms, Bruckner, Schumann and Mahler. Then in 2004 he surprised the musical world by leaving his Dutch colleagues to take up the reins of Europe's oldest ensemble, Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra, which Chailly has re-energised, putting it back squarely on the musical map. In the process he has given us thought-provoking and very 21st-century cycles of the Beethoven and Brahms symphonies. To see him at work in Leipzig is to witness the true joy of music-making at the highest level. Chailly is due to return to the world of opera in 2015 at the helm of La Scala, in Milan, the place of his birth and musical education.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Beethoven Symphonies Nos 1-9. Overtures

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra /

Riccardo Chailly

Decca (M) 5 478 2721DH5 (A/T1)

MITSUKO UCHIDA

(b1948) Pianist

After coming second in the 1975 Leeds International Piano Competition, Uchida made her reputation as a Mozartian when her recording of the piano sonatas won a Gramophone Award in 1989. She won a second Award in 2001 for her recording of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto with Pierre Boulez.

JONATHAN BISS

There are, relatively speaking, many inspiring pianists, but Mitsuko is also just a hugely inspiring person. Her integrity is absolute. Her devotion to young musicians and her efforts to bring her ideals to bear on the musical world are inexhaustible.

Her energy level is astonishing – unrivalled, in my own experience! – and her intellectual curiosity and sometimes sly wit make her enormously fun to be around. But most of all, the passion for music that she exudes from her every pore is an inspiration and a lesson for the rest of us.

However much she may have achieved, however wonderfully she may have played yesterday, her desire to come even closer today to the music that she loves – and to share the results with the world at large – is palpable. It is impossible to be in Mitsuko's presence without feeling compelled to become a better, more fully committed musician.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Mozart Piano Concertos - Nos 23 and 24

Cleveland Orchestra / Mitsuko Uchida *pf*

Decca (E) 478 1524DH (12/09)



PHOTOGRAPHY: JAN WOTAS/CORBIS, WYOU VIELZ



TITO GOBBI

(1913-84) Baritone

In 1942, Gobbi made his debut at La Scala as Belcore (L'elisir d'amore) and also performed in the Italian premiere of

Wozzeck. He made his Covent Garden debut in 1951 and became the leading Verdi baritone of his generation.

GERALD FINLEY

My first recording of *Tosca* was with Tito Gobbi as Scarpia. What an introduction to this singer! There was a snarl, a sort of delicious savouring of every sung word that gripped the ear and the soul, a baritone capable of power, tenderness and malevolence. This

was acting through the voice, yet the technique was effortless and hidden. Recently, YouTube clips have demonstrated a stillness, self-assurance and ease of delivery, a consummate stage performer. Beyond that introduction, as a young singer I was handed *Tito Gobbi on his World of Italian Opera* by his collaborator Ida Cook, which, in every line, has a gem of advice on what the singing profession entails. His key advice: humility. His commitment to new opera was vigorous. His paintings and work as a director confirm that this giant of the singing stage was a fully rounded artist, who gave his all for the art of opera. A true hero.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Verdi Falstaff

Gobbi; Schwarzkopf; Moffo; Philharmonia Chorus and Orchestra / Herbert von Karajan
Warner Classics (M) 2 948199-2 (10/99*)



ANGELA GHEORGHIU

(b1965) Soprano

Gheorghiu studied with Arta Florescu before winning the Belvedere International Competition in 1990. She made her first appearances at Covent Garden as Zerlina and Mimi in 1992. She has won five Gramophone Awards, most recently for Madama Butterfly in 2009.

MARTIN CULLINGFORD

Ever since the BBC cleared its schedule at the 11th hour one

evening in 1994 to broadcast Verdi's *La traviata* from Covent Garden with Gheorghiu as Violetta, the Romanian soprano has been a superstar. As Solti, who was conducting, said at a rehearsal: 'The girl is wonderful. She can do everything.'

If it was Verdi that put her on the international map, it was music of the *verismo* that has come to epitomise her art. A magnificent series of Puccini recordings under Antonio Pappano for EMI (*Tosca*, *La rondine*, *Il trittico* and *Madama Butterfly* – two of them securing Gramophone Awards) helped further her global fame. Her voice, essentially lyric but with a smoky edge, has that undefinable quality that makes a great singer: it has temperament. Her sometimes bumpy relationship with opera-house managements has, meanwhile, enhanced her 'diva' status.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Puccini Madama Butterfly
Angela Gheorghiu sop Jonas Kaufmann ten
Santa Cecilia Academy Chorus and Orchestra
/ Antonio Pappano
Warner Classics (M) 2 264187-2 (3/09)



SIMON KEENLYSIDE

(b1959) Baritone

*Keenlyside learned many of the great baritone roles at Scottish Opera from 1989-94. In 1995 he made his first appearances at Glyndebourne (Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*) and La Scala (Papageno*

in Die Zauberflöte). He has won two Gramophone Awards, for 'Songs of War' and 'Tales of Opera'.

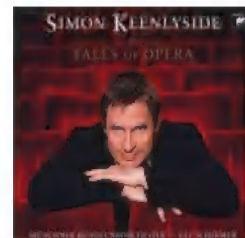
MALCOLM MARTINEAU

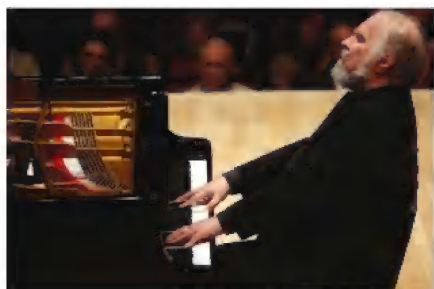
The reason that Simon Keenlyside is one of the truly great song singers of the past 20 years is his love of and investment in all the poetry he sings. Song singing is the most personal, and in a way the most private, element in a musician's career. Simon brings all his life into his songs and only chooses repertoire he can sympathise with. His love of nature and the outdoors and the weird nomadic life of a travelling musician are all brought into his song performances and choices.

As with all of us, Schubert is 'king', but we have enjoyed performing Wolf (particularly the wide-ranging poetry of the Mörike Lieder) and many Schumann, Brahms, Mahler and Strauss songs over the years and also the wonderful French repertoire of Ravel, Fauré and Poulenc which brings out Simon's seemingly inexhaustible palette of vocal colours.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'Tales of Opera'
Simon Keenlyside bar
Munich Radio Orchestra / Ulf Schirmer
Sony Classical (F) 82876 88482-2 (11/06)





RADU LUPU

(b1945) Pianist
Lupu won the Enescu International, Van Cliburn, and Leeds piano competitions between 1966 and 1969. His recording

of Schubert's piano duets with Murray Perahia won a Gramophone Award in 1986.

STEVEN ISSERLIS

Radu Lupu lives in a different world from that of most successful classical musicians today. For a start, he refuses to record – or to allow microphones into his concerts; he refuses to do any sort of publicity; and in fact, it is even quite hard

to tempt him into the concert hall. 'Career' means nothing to him; the only thing that matters to him is the music. His interpretations seem to emerge from deep within him, his profound understanding and knowledge of the works he plays allied to an overwhelming emotional power. And the sounds he coaxes from the piano! Unbelievably beautiful. My only complaint about him is that he is far too self-critical. Despite his protestations to the contrary, it's a great pity that he no longer records; many of his discs are treasures. But best is to hear him live; to hear him play Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann – anything! – is an unforgettable experience.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Schumann Kreisleriana. Humoreske

Radu Lupu *pf*

Decca (M) 440 496-2 (4/95)



JOSÉ CARRERAS

(b1946) Tenor

As one of The Three Tenors alongside Domingo and Pavarotti, Carreras found fame well beyond the opera world. He recorded West Side Story with Bernstein and has won two Gramophone Awards.

FREDERICA VON STADE

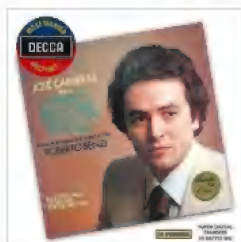
I can remember the first time I was lucky enough to hear José Carreras. It was during a recording of *Der Rosenkavalier* in Holland and José was singing the tenor in the *Levée* scene. I remember my jaw dropping in a sort of sonic ecstasy! It was the most beautiful sound that came out of this amazing artist. I was also lucky enough to sing with him after that and to record with him again, and I will treasure forever the memory of this sound, this presence, this amazing artist and human being. Bravo to you, José, a thousand times!

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'José Carreras sings Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Mercadante and Ponchielli'

Carreras; RPO / Roberto Benzi

Decca (M) 480 8142



BENJAMIN BRITTEN

(1913-76) Pianist and conductor

Britten has entered the Hall of Fame specifically for his contribution to recorded music as a pianist and conductor, and particularly for his performances of other composers' works.

STUART BEDFORD

No one produced colours at the keyboard like Britten did. I had the privilege of watching him play from when I was eight years old and every bar he played had some special shading and meaning, but I don't think he would have been happy as a professional concert pianist: he didn't have the right physical make-up and always had health problems. He also suffered from terrible stage fright and was physically sick before every performance. My mother once accosted him while he was downing a large whisky before taking to the podium to conduct, and he replied that he wouldn't be able to go into the pit without it!

As a conductor he was always very clear, and he stood with a slight stoop. He was always moving the music on, and shaping it very carefully. Any orchestral musician who played under him loved him.

As an accompanist he played as if the piano part was of equal importance to the vocal line. He wasn't deliberately drawing attention to himself, it was more that he had such a colourful way of playing that one's ear was naturally drawn to his performance. I vividly remember a performance of *Winterreise* with Pears at Aldeburgh – it was simply riveting.

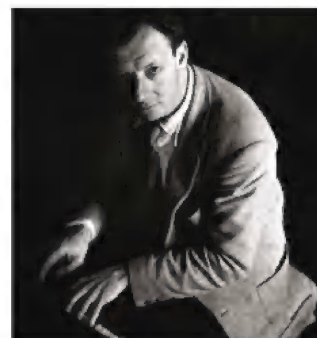
RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'Britten the Performer:

Complete Decca Recordings'

Various orchestras / Benjamin Britten *pf*

Decca (S) (27) 478 5672DC27 (5/14)





EVGENY KISSIN

(b1971) Pianist

In 1988 Kissin made his London debut with the LSO and Valery Gergiev and also appeared for the first time with Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. In 1997 he was the first pianist to give a solo recital at the BBC Proms and gave seven encores.

BRYCE MORRISON

A prodigy of prodigies, Evgeny Kissin first came to fame in March 1984 at the age of 12 when he performed Chopin's Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 2 in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory with the Moscow State Philharmonic under Dmitri Kitaenko. His performances, recorded live – live in every sense – were released to wonder and astonishment. Having already made his debut, aged 10, in the Mozart D minor Concerto, Kissin already sounded like a seasoned pianist and his subsequent intensive career took the music world by storm.

But if Godowsky's famous quip 'a wunderkind is one in whom the wonder vanishes and the child remains' could hardly apply to Kissin, his awe-inspiring concerts and recordings have sometimes suggested a contradiction, even a coarsening of his talent. Comments about 'glaring daring' and a longing for 'enchantment' rather than 'war and conquest' became increasingly frequent, and it is significant that appearances and recordings have decreased in recent years. This despite Kissin's declaration (and as I found to my cost he is notoriously reticent in interview) that love is his only criterion when deciding what to play and how to play it. But the memory of hyper-sensitivity in a group of Chopin Mazurkas and more than athletic prowess in, say, Brahms's *Paganini Variations* and Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* haunts the imagination.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Beethoven Piano Concertos (complete)

Evgeny Kissin pf

LSO / Sir Colin Davis

Warner Classics ® ③ 206311-2 (11/08)



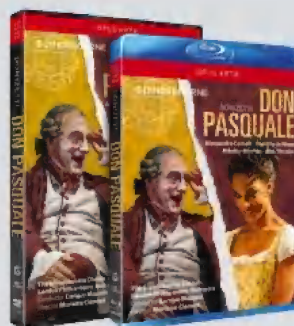
OPUS ARTE



RICHARD II SHAKESPEARE Royal Shakespeare Company

David Tennant takes the title role alongside Oliver Ford Davies, Michael Pennington and Nigel Lindsay in this 'definitive production of a great play' (Daily Mail)

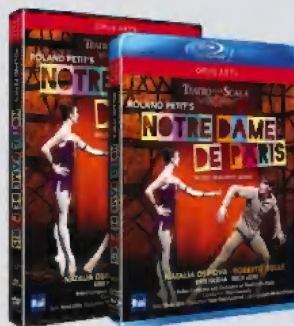
DVD & BLU-RAY



DON PASQUALE DONIZETTI Glyndebourne

Mariame Clément's sensitive and perceptive production, which was hailed by the *Financial Times* as 'a Glyndebourne classic'. Includes Alessandro Corbelli, Danielle de Niese and Enrique Mazzola, who conducts with flair and panache.

DVD & BLU-RAY



NOTRE DAME DE PARIS PETIT La Scala Ballet

A modern ballet hit with Roland Petit's cool, cabaret-style choreography and chic costumes by Yves Saint Laurent. This tragic novel is performed by two stars, Roberto Bolle and Natalia Osipova.

DVD & BLU-RAY



GREAT PERFORMANCES Royal Opera House

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OF ACADEMIC CHOIRS IFAS \ DVOŘÁK CHORAL SUMMER OR-FA \ JARMILÁ NOVOTNÁ FESTIVAL LITEŇ \
ČESKÝ KRUMLOV FESTIVAL \ DVOŘÁK PRAGUE FESTIVAL \ STRINGS OF AUTUMN \ HARMONIA MORAVIAE FESTIVAL \
KŘOMĚŘÍŽ MUSIC SUMMER \ JANÁČEK PRAGUE \ JANÁČEK BRNO \ NETWORK OF BASIC ART SCHOOLS \
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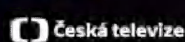
2014

year of czech music

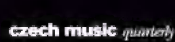
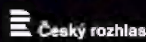
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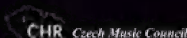
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ALAIN LANCERON

(b1949) Record company executive

Winner of last year's Gramophone Special Achievement Award, Lanceron has recently been named President of Warner Classics and Erato.

NATALIE DESSAY

I have worked with Alain from the very start of my recording career.

Our first album was the Mozart concert arias, and that started a partnership that created an important and varied discography. Alain was also, early in my career, a supporter of releasing DVDs as a testimony to my stage life and work and that meant a lot to me. In particular,

I remember 'The Miracle of the Voice'. It was his idea – and quite innovative at the time – to bring together, on a single DVD, scenes from several productions and venues.

What I do appreciate is that Alain has ideas that he proposes, but he never imposes. As he always says, 'It is not me singing, but you!' I think the key to his success is that he has all these strong ideas about singing and singers, but for him a singer is more than a beautiful voice – he also appreciates personalities. And I am lucky enough to be among them.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'The Miracle of the Voice'

Natalie Dessay *sop* various artists

Virgin Classics (P) DVD 363 339-9 (2/07)



MARILYN HORNE

(b1934) Mezzo-soprano

As a student, Horne took part in masterclasses with German soprano Lotte Lehmann. A fine interpreter of Handel and Rossini, Horne helped spearhead the bel canto revival in the 1960s and '70s.

JOYCE DIDONATO

She is a gutsy maverick and distinctive force of nature, a valiant survivor and notable trailblazer, a passionate advocate for the future of singing and possessor of a personality that lights up every stage she graces. She redefined what it means to be a modern-day singer not only via her singular voice, but also through her widely praised television appearances, her undertaking of long-shelved opera roles, and through her fierce support of modern composers. She gave birth to opera fans for life via her distinctive voice and unforgettable interpretations of work from Handel to Stravinsky. Her unmistakable chemistry with the likes of Sutherland, Pavarotti and Johnny Carson thrust her to superstardom, and she used every bit of that well-earned fame to shine a blazing light on music and on the marvel of the human voice. Tireless in her endeavours, she continues to pass on the legacy of her passion and knowledge to the next generation of artists. The operatic landscape is vastly richer because of her remarkable and singular contributions. She is the legendary Marilyn Horne.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Thomas Mignon

Sols; Philharmonia Orch / Antonio de Almeida

Sony Classical (S) 3 88697 52733-2

SIR THOMAS ALLEN

(b1944) Baritone

After studies at the Royal College of Music, Allen made his debut with WNO in 1969. He has distinguished himself in an exceptionally broad repertory, from Purcell to Thea Musgrave.

SOILE ISOKOSKI

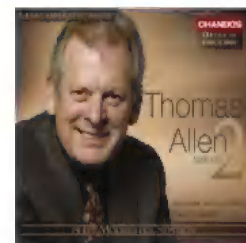
I was in the audience at Salzburg when I first saw Tom; it was *Figaro* and he sang the Count. I was very impressed and liked him immediately. Since then we've done *Meistersinger*, *Così*, *Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne* together: all very different styles but he does them all so well. He has a wonderfully flexible voice; it's not the biggest but it can ride an orchestra with ease. He's such a wonderful communicator with the audience and he brings the characters 100 per cent to life. And on stage he's a wonderful colleague: he's always happy, always positive. It's always a pleasure to work with him.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'Great Operatic Arias, Vol 2'

Thomas Allen *bar* **Philharmonia Orchestra / David Parry**

Chandos (P) CHAN3155 (6/08)





ARTUR SCHNABEL

(1882-1951) Pianist

Born in Austria, Schnabel made his name in Berlin, where he lived from 1900-33; he became an American citizen in 1944. His recordings of Mozart, Schubert and Beethoven are legendary.

NALEN ANTHONI

Provocative words from pianist Denis Matthews:

'Most of our modern ideas and standards of Beethoven playing have been influenced by Artur Schnabel, directly or indirectly, through his records,

his editions or the ideals he handed on to his pupils. His insight was unique, his playing profound both in intellect and emotion.' Unique insight came from a personal freedom of response to rhythm and structure. Beyond the telescoped phrases, the impulsively expanded and contracted passage work, lay a singular ability to maintain tension and continuity, and find hidden depths along the way – not only in Beethoven but in everything. Audiences today would probably find aspects of his style laughable. But here's a paradox: Schnabel's Beethoven piano sonatas set recorded 80 years ago is still available. Will any modern pianist match that?

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Beethoven Piano Sonatas (complete)

Artur Schnabel *pf*

EMI (M) 763765-2 (7/91)



EMILE BERLINER

(1851-1929) Inventor

The German-born, American inventor was the man who started it all by creating the gramophone.

JAMES MCCARTHY

Building on the work of Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell, Berliner invented the gramophone, patenting it in 1887. He was the first person to record on flat discs (rather than cylinders) that were able to be mass-produced. He founded the Berliner Gramophone Company and, working with Fred Gaisberg, persuaded two of the greatest singers of his day to sign, Enrico Caruso and Dame Nellie Melba. The sales of these opera stars were phenomenal. He added to the allure of his label by using Francis Barraud's His Master's Voice painting as the trademark for his company. Expanding into Germany he founded Deutsche Grammophon and in the UK the Gramophone Company Ltd. A Renaissance man of great vision and creativity, Berliner also invented a microphone, a radial aircraft engine, an early helicopter, acoustical tiles and a loom for weaving.



STEPHEN HOUGH

(b1961) Pianist

Hough won the piano finals of the 1978 Young Musician of the Year competition and has made more than 50 recordings, primarily for Hyperion. He has won eight Gramophone Awards, including the special 'Gold Disc'.

ANDREW KEENER

We love to stick labels on people of achievement. With Stephen, it's 'polymath', but this hardly begins to describe the breadth of his outlook and intellect. Accompanying a first-edition query list is likely to be a postcard; no ordinary postcard but one bearing a reproduction of a Hough painting. Most great soloists would be happy to deliver a Rachmaninov concerto and retire gracefully for the rest of the programme. Not

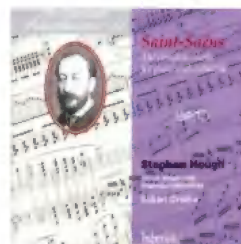
Stephen: there he was later in the evening, beside me in a Denver control room, listening to playbacks of his magnificent *Missa mirabilis*.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Saint-Saëns Works for piano and orchestra

Stephen Hough *pf* **CBSO / Sakari Oramo**

Hyperion (E) 2 CDA67331/2 (11/01)





Sir Edward Lewis, right, making a presentation to Bill Townsley in 1976

SIR EDWARD LEWIS

(1900-80) Record executive
Lewis led Decca from 1929 until his death, transforming it into a major label. He famously said, 'A company manufacturing gramophones but not records is rather like one making razors but not the consumable blades'.

ANTHONY POLLARD

Sir Edward Lewis, a shy, retiring man who did not seek publicity, stands alongside those great personalities who shaped the record industry in the last century. As a stockbroker in the 1920s he was involved in the flotation of what became the Decca Record Company, releasing its first recordings in the summer of 1929: from that point his life was dedicated to Decca where he led a loyal and talented team. During the Second World War Decca developed underwater sonar and radar, putting this military experience to commercial use with the launch of frrr (full frequency range recording) in 1944-45 when Decca extended recorded frequency response beyond anything commercially achieved before.

Pioneering the European launch of the LP, Decca challenged the better-established companies and attracted leading artists such as Sutherland, Pavarotti and Solti; with epoch-making recordings such as Wagner's *Ring*, it became one of the world's leading labels. Sir Edward's company, which so epitomised all his fine qualities, was sold to PolyGram in January 1980, just days after his death at the age of 79.



JESSYE NORMAN

(b1945) Soprano
Norman made her La Scala debut in 1972 as Aida and her Metropolitan Opera debut in Les troyens in 1983.

PHILIP KENNICOTT

By the time the CD burst on to the market and infused new vigour into the recording industry in the 1980s, Jessye Norman was more than ready. She had spent the 1970s doing the kind of work too many artists now eschew: learning obscure, difficult repertoire, early Verdi, unknown Haydn. The voice had darkened, grown full beyond measure. Then came an astonishing series of recordings and performances, of Berlioz, Strauss, Wagner, Mahler and Schoenberg. Her 1983 traversal of Strauss's *Four Last Songs* won just about every accolade that mattered, including a *Gramophone* Award. The inexhaustible richness of the voice, the transfiguring tenderness, the boundless resignation, would change the way the world understood these songs. And even then, Norman was just beginning to dominate the stage, and the age.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

R Strauss Four Last Songs

Jessye Norman sop Gewandhaus Orchestra /
Kurt Masur Philips/Decca (P) 475 8507 (10/83)





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RICCARDO MUTI

(b1941) Conductor

Muti was Music Director of the (New) Philharmonia from 1973-82, the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1980-92 and La Scala from 1986-2005. He has conducted the Chicago SO since 2010

EDWARD GREENFIELD

What was obvious from the start was that Muti had taut control of orchestras. He was never in doubt as to what he wanted, and the players knew that he would not rest until they provided it. What was clear was that unlike most latter-day conductors he did not work by persuasion. Harking back to an earlier period, he tended to work

as a dictator rather in the manner earlier adopted by Toscanini or Szell.

Muti went on to record a whole sequence of operas for EMI, including a star-studded *Aida*, a classic recording of the modern age. And he also went on to record a fair selection of the symphonic repertory, almost always with the Philharmonia. In the years that have followed, Muti has recorded for different labels, but his earliest recordings can generally be counted among the finest. He looks set to continue to make recordings for many years yet, particularly now he heads one of the US's greatest ensembles.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Verdi Aida

Caballé; Domingo; Royal Opera Chorus, New

Philharmonia Orchestra / Riccardo Muti

Warner Classics (M) (3) 640630-2 (2/75)



RICHARD MOHR

(1919-2002) Producer

Producer at RCA Victor from 1943-77, Mohr specialised in opera – he oversaw more than 80 complete recordings – and produced many classics of the catalogue.

MALCOLM WALKER

Richard Mohr is remembered primarily for his operatic work that included premieres of Barber's *Vanessa* and Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, as well as the first studio LP recordings of *Ernani*, *Luisa Miller* and *Lucrezia Borgia*. His orchestral work covered live performances of Toscanini and the NBC SO. In total he produced in excess of 80 complete operas, including the classic Beecham *La bohème*. After retiring in 1977 he worked regularly on the Metropolitan Opera Quiz broadcasts where his encyclopaedic knowledge was legendary.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Puccini La bohème

Björling; de los Angeles; RCA Victor Chorus and Orchestra / Sir Thomas Beecham

Naxos mono (S) (2) 8 111249/50 (1/57)



FEODOR CHALIAPIN

(1873-1938) Bass

The Russian singer was a member of the Imperial Opera at the Mariinsky Theatre from 1894-96 and the Bolshoi Opera from 1899-1914. His debut at La Scala was in 1901. He made his first appearance at the Met in 1907 and left Russia in 1921 to tour the world.

DAVID PATRICK STEARNS

As a self-taught singer with a rogue lifestyle, Chaliapin might seem to be an accidental legend: a natural talent

emerging from the Russian steppes whose grand but tragic presence made him the foremost Boris Godunov of his time. That notion was vigorously dispelled by the great voice (and Gramophone) critic John Steane: 'Chaliapin was a disciplined, unmannered artist with a voice that stayed fresh into his 60s. Probably the greatest actor-singer the operatic stage has known,' he wrote. And not a 'singer-actor'?

Compared to his contemporaries and descendants, Chaliapin had a pre-Caruso voice, a lean instrument with no extraneous roar or rumble and a delicate upper range capable of conveying disarming intimacy – all powered by a profound theatrical imagination. In his 1933 *Adventures of Don Quixote* film, the voice, words and physicality are a single, naturalistic entity. His 12 discs' worth of recordings show how masterfully he integrated rhetoric into

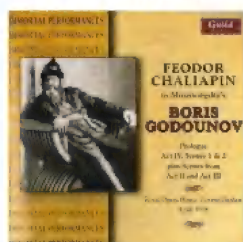
a vocal line with minimal sense of external observation. He became what he sang. Was there any comparison? Maria Callas.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Mussorgsky Boris Godunov (highlights)

Chaliapin; ROH / Vincenzo Bellezza

Guild mono (B) GHCD2206





C ROBERT FINE

(1922-82) Recording engineer

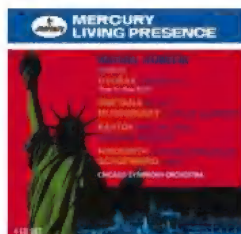
Although he started out working in films, Fine turned his questing, inventive approach to audio recording and, with his wife Wilma Cozart, created one of the great classical labels, Mercury Living Presence.

ROB COWAN

Bob Fine helped pioneer the judicious use of a single microphone, to spectacular effect for one of the Mercury label's earliest blockbusters, a luminous vinyl production of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* with the Chicago Symphony under Kubelík. The working partnership of Fine and his wife Wilma Cozart led to some of the most realistic-sounding recordings of the LP era, single-channel 'living presence' soon widening to a panoramic, 'as-heard-from-the-rostrum' brand of stereo. Each LP would carry details of the recording equipment used, while the covers, with the word 'stereo' boldly daubed across the top of the sleeve, suggested, in visual terms, what the process of listening would soon confirm: an audio confrontation with no holds barred.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Mussorgsky/Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition*
Chicago Symphony Orchestra /
Rafael Kubelík
 Mercury Living Presence (M) ④ 475686-2



NICOLAI GHIAUROV

(1929-2004) Bass

One of the finest singers of the latter half of the 20th century, Ghiaurov was renowned for his roles in Russian repertoire. He often sang (and recorded) with his soprano wife, Mirella Freni.

RICHARD FAIRMAN

Majestic, proud, heart-warming, the bass voice of Nicolai Ghiaurov was one of the vocal glories of the post-war era. He bestrode the world's operatic stages in the great Italian, French and Russian bass roles. He was at his peak at nearly the same time as his compatriot Boris Christoff, yet they were bass singers of very different kinds – Christoff black-voiced and implacable, Ghiaurov grandly human and sympathetic. As Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov, he was deeply moving, as Gounod's Mephistopheles a devil of saturnine wit, as Verdi's Philip II a regal figure with a human heart.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

'Nicolai Ghiaurov: Opera Highlights'
Nicolai Ghiaurov *sop* various orchestras
 Orfeo (M) C671 051B



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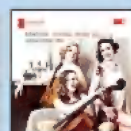


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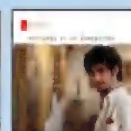
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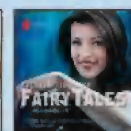
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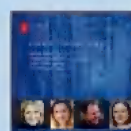
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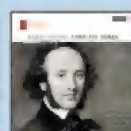
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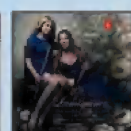
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Thutle Songs



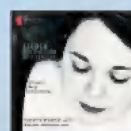
Mendelssohn Songs



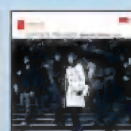
Anna Stokes & Lisa Friend



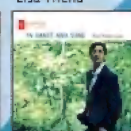
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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue



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Recording of the Month

Bryce Morrison marvels at the depth and variety of Marc-André Hamelin's many-sided virtuosity



Janáček • Schumann

Janáček *On an Overgrown Path*, Book 1

Schumann *Kinderszenen*, Op 15.

Waldszenen, Op 82

Marc-André Hamelin *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68030 (74' • DDD)

Marc-André Hamelin's normally genial features cloud at the description of him as a 'super virtuoso'. For him such apparent praise implies limitation rather than virtue. But here, in his latest disc of music by Janáček and Schumann, he shows himself a virtuoso in a deeper sense, a virtuoso in sound, colour and poetic empathy, one who, to quote Liszt, 'breathes the breath of life'. Using his prodigious command in music of a transcendental difficulty – the Chopin-Godowsky Etudes, the major works of Alkan, Albéniz's *Iberia*, etc – he displays gifts which show him as first and foremost a musician's musician. In music of an elusive rather than flamboyant challenge he is a master of simplicity, of music which, in Goethe's words, proves that it is when working within limits that man creates his greatest work. The fewer the notes, the more subtle and exposed the task. Certainly you could never align Hamelin with, say, Horowitz's teasing, lavishly tinted sophistication or Cziffra's hysterical bravura. He is a virtuoso in another sense.

Linking Janáček and Schumann is both a natural and an enterprising choice.



'Here, once more, the knife-edge between composer and interpreter, between creator and recreator is held in the finest balance'

The seeds of Schumann's final collapse are already present in *Waldszenen*'s 'Verrufene Stelle' ('Place of evil fame', where flowers are nourished by human blood rather than the sun's rays) or in 'Fürchtenmachen' ('Frightening') from *Kinderszenen*. Such things lead to a more oblique sense of desolation in Janáček's *On an Overgrown Path*, the very title evocative of the past, of a time long eclipsed by bitter adult experience; reflections of despair rather than tranquillity. Janáček's failed marriage, his unrequited passion for a younger woman and the death of his daughter Olga at the age of 20 are all mirrored in music of the darkest introspection. Of

On an Overgrown Path, Janáček wrote 'they are of all things most dear to me', as if he cradled his own unhappiness. How else can you explain titles such as 'Unutterable Anguish' and 'In Tears'? Such tortured music was predictably greeted with incomprehension; and, like Liszt before him (the titles of his later dark-hued utterances, 'Nuages gris', 'Unstern' or 'La lugubre gondola' tell their own tale) or Fauré after him, his profoundest creations were ignored, causing him serious doubts. Thus, he wrote, 'I no longer saw any worth in my work and scarcely believed what I said. I had become convinced that no one would notice anything.' Admirably described (by the Janáček scholar John Tyrrell) as 'some of the profoundest, most disturbing music that Janáček had written, their interest is quite out of proportion to their modest means and ambition'. Again, these are pieces 'which begin disarmingly but are emotionally derailed within the briefest of spans'.

Hamelin's subtle inflection captures all of the opening 'Our Evenings', his nuance and musical breathing somehow beyond such an academic term as *rubato*, the sudden disruptions like flashes of anger flawlessly contrasted. Time and again he makes you think vocally, of the range and flexibility of a great singer. Hear him drop from *mezzo-forte* to *pianissimo* despondency in 'A Blown-Away Leaf', a retreat as it were from



Marc-André Hamelin displays 'the range and flexibility of a great singer' in his wondrous pairing of great piano music by Janáček and Schumann

Dylan Thomas's 'Do not go gentle into that good night'. He is no less sensitive to the polka of 'Come With Us!', a brief memory of Moravian folk dance and happier times. Again, it would be difficult to imagine a more lucid yet evocative sense of 'The Frýdek Madonna', with its grave chorale offset by mystical shimmering. Hamelin makes the limping steps of 'Unutterable Anguish' like a prophecy of Debussy's painful progression in 'Des pas sur la neige'

(*Préludes*, Book 1), while in the octaves of 'In Tears' lies an uncomfortable awareness of the contradiction behind an outwardly conciliatory conclusion.

Turning to Schumann, Hamelin is no less illuminating than in his previous recordings of music where poetry and introspection are combined (*Fantasie*, *Carnaval*, *Etudes symphoniques*, etc). In *Waldszenen* and *Kinderszenen*, inwardness and an interior magic are only occasionally contradicted with extroversion; there is

more of Eusebius (the man of dreams) than of Florestan (the man of action) and so, once more, the emphasis for the pianist is on a primarily interior world. How often have you heard the entrance ('Eintritt') to *Waldszenen* played with such poised rhythmic life or listened to the quizzical song of the 'Vogel als Prophet' ('Prophet bird') with such a great awareness of its oddity? Here, once more, the knife-edge between composer and interpreter, between creator and recreator is held in the finest balance. And you could hardly wish for a greater sense of wonder in *Kinderszenen*'s opening 'Von fremden Ländern und Menschen' ('Of foreign lands and peoples') or a more unfaltering poise in the concluding 'Der Dichter spricht' ('The poet speaks').

Writing to his beloved Clara regarding *Kinderszenen*, Schumann told her, 'you will have to forget you are a virtuoso'. On the contrary, and returning to my opening proposition, Hamelin shows that he is a virtuoso in another and richly inclusive sense. **G**

Listening points Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Track 1: Janáček, *On an Overgrown Path* - No 1, 'Our Evenings', opening - 1'45"

The opening of 'Our Evenings', where Hamelin sets the scene with playing of a magical ease and fluidity, a rare intimacy that captures an alternating quiet despair and sudden outrage.

Track 8: *On an Overgrown Path* - No 8, 'Unutterable Anguish', opening - 1'58"

The start of 'Unutterable Anguish', and playing that captures an acute sense of desolation. Here all memory of the briefly cheerful dance rhythm of 'Come With Us' (No 3) is erased.

Track 17: Schumann, *Waldszenen* - No 7, 'Vogel als Prophet'

In Schumann's 'Prophet bird', Hamelin's playing suggests how this strange creature has somehow winged its way into the 20th century. This may well be the sort of music that puzzled and distressed Clara Schumann's more conservative expectations.

Track 32: Schumann, *Kinderszenen* - No 13, 'Der Dichter spricht'

A serene and affirmative end from Hamelin to a cycle telling exuberantly and poignantly of childhood seen through adult eyes.



Orchestral



Richard Whitehouse reviews Dusapin from Radio France:

'Recommended as the most significant release of new music from Deutsche Grammophon in some while' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 31**



Andrew Achenbach on the new Sibelius cycle from Storgårds:

'His personable reading has a responsiveness, ruddy complexion and rhythmic spring that count for a great deal' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 40**

Adams • Mendelssohn

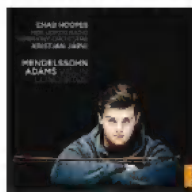
Adams Violin Concerto

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Op 64

Chad Hoopes *violin* **MDR Leipzig Radio**

Symphony Orchestra / Kristjan Järvi

Naïve ⑤ V5368 (59' • DDD)



Bravo to the young American violinist Chad Hoopes for choosing such an

unusual coupling of concertos for his debut CD. The Mendelssohn E minor might be at the very core of the repertoire but his espousal of the John Adams hints at an investigative spirit and a range of tastes that is refreshing.

His performance of the Mendelssohn, if accompanied no more than reliably by the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra under Kristjan Järvi, points to a musician with all the technical gifts that these days are accepted as norms but also with stylistic taste, purity of tone and an attractive blend of flair and interpretative discretion. In time – he is still only 19 – he will find that the music can withstand, and benefit from, a little more breathing space on occasion; but the youthful ardour that he brings to his playing is appealing.

John Adams's Concerto, composed in 1993 for Jorja Fleezanis, who gave the premiere in Minnesota the following year, taps Hoopes's lyricism and dexterity to gainful effect. Here he is up against the classic recording by Gidon Kremer on Nonesuch but newcomers to the Concerto – or, indeed, advocates of the Kremer – will not be disappointed with Hoopes's understanding and realisation of the Adams idiom, most hauntingly voiced in the Chaconne of the slow movement, where, as Adams says, 'the violin floats like a disembodied spirit around and about the orchestral tissue'. Here and in the hectic rhythmic pulse of the finale Hoopes is in his element. **Geoffrey Norris**

Adams – selected comparison:

Kremer, LSO, Nagano (6/96) (NONE) 7559 79360-2

JS Bach

'Complete Solo Keyboard Concertos'

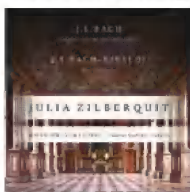
Keyboard Concertos – BWV593 (after Vivaldi, RV565, transcr Zilberquit); BWV596 (after Vivaldi, RV522, transcr Zilberquit); BWV1052; BWV1053; BWV1054; BWV1055; BWV1056; BWV1057; BWV1058

Julia Zilberquit *pf*

Moscow Virtuosi / Saulius Sondeckis

Warner Classics ⑤ ② 2564 63686-9 (144' • DDD)

From Musical Heritage Society originals



Julia Zilberquit's Bach concerto cycle for Musical Heritage Society gains a new

lease of catalogue life on Warner Classics.

The set begins and ends with two Bach organ arrangements of Vivaldi concertos in Zilberquit's own versions for piano and chamber orchestra – transcriptions of transcriptions, so to speak. In the opening concerto, BWV593, originally for two violins and cello (RV565), the first-movement fugue's four-voice texture is judiciously apportioned between piano and strings, while the imitative writing in the finale loses nothing in translation when applied to the piano. The fast outer movements unfold in a stern and relatively uninflected manner that suggests little of the music's ebullience, although Zilberquit's singing tone and innate sense of line come home to roost in the central *Largo e spiccato*. Similar comments apply to the revamped Vivaldi A minor Concerto, BWV596 (RV522), highlighted by a slow movement laced with lovely embellishments in the piano part.

As for the Bach concertos proper, the Moscow Virtuosi are nothing if not disciplined and precise. Attacks and releases in fast movements boast unquestionable point and unanimity, notably in the downward scales of BWV1055's finale and the repeated-note phrase in BWV1054's first-movement theme. Slow movements best demonstrate the orchestra's expressive potential. In the central movement of

BWV1053, the subtle colours emerging from the *arco* strings against the *pizzicato* bass and cello parts justify the unusually broad tempo. Also notice the continuo part adding discreet splashes of colour during Zilberquit's gorgeous rendition of the *Largo* of BWV1056.

Still, one misses the intelligent dynamic scaling, textural variety and dance-like character that distinguishes the András Schiff, Murray Perahia and Angela Hewitt Bach concerto cycles. To cite one example, the Zilberquit/Sondeckis BWV1054 finale pounds the music into your ears, with little differentiation between beats, while Hewitt/Tognetti's faster tempo, suppler phrasing and more transparent sonority bring the music to uplifting life. Likewise, the *Allegro assai* of the revamped Fourth *Brandenburg Concerto* (BWV1057) here defines the three Ls: literal, laboured and listless, in comparison to Hewitt/Tognetti's playful aura and understated rhythmic snap. The close-up impact of the engineering reveals a well-balanced but slightly strident ambience and, in sum, Zilberquit and company have their memorable moments. **Jed Distler**

Keyboard Concertos – selected comparisons:

Schiff, COE (11/90th) (DECC) 478 2363DB4

Perahia, ASMF (5/01st, 6/02nd) (SONY) 88697 74291-2

Hewitt, Australian CO, Tognetti

(9/05th) (HYPER) CDA67607/8

Beethoven • Mozart

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15^a

Mozart Piano Concerto No 12, K414^b

Leon Fleisher *pf*

Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra /

André Cluytens, Georg Ludwig Jochum

ICA Classics mono ⑤ ICAC5121 (61' • ADD)

Recorded ^b1957, ^a1960



Still very much with us at the age of 86, Leon Fleisher made these Cologne recordings midway between his winning the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium in 1952

and 1965, when he lost the use of two fingers on his right hand to focal dystonia.

The Beethoven was made in March 1960, a few months before he recorded the work – rather more cleanly – with Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra. In both performances, Fleisher takes the opening movement at quite a lick, a true *Allegro con brio*, but the playing in this Cologne account is gabbled and hypertense, and the recording is almost as rusty as the orchestral playing. Things settle down in the *Largo* but the concluding *Allegro scherzando* has the air of a man laughing through gritted teeth.

The Mozart, to which the newly two-handed Fleisher recently returned, is another matter. Fleisher was a Schnabel pupil and, like Schnabel, is a distinguished Mozartian. This 1957 Cologne performance of the gamesome A major Concerto which Mozart wrote for Vienna in 1782 is most agreeably done. Eugen Jochum's able younger brother Georg Ludwig conducts and though the orchestra is none too well recorded, Fleisher's own shapely and cultured playing is nicely caught by the microphones. **Richard Osborne**
Beethoven – selected comparison:

Fleisher, Cleveland Orch, Szell

(10/65⁹) (SONY) 88691 92805-2

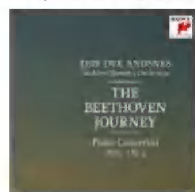
Beethoven

'The Beethoven Journey'

Piano Concertos – No 2, Op 19; No 4, Op 58

Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Leif Ove Andsnes *pf*

Sony Classical © 88883 70548-2 (64' • DDD)



My reaction when asked to review this disc was a somewhat uncritical 'hurray',

having immensely enjoyed the first volume of Andsnes's 'Beethoven Journey', a view with which my esteemed editor happily concurred when he made it Recording of the Month (11/12). So does the second volume live up to expectations?

The answer is a resolute yes. The Second Concerto is sometimes a weak link in cycles of these pieces but Andsnes has two great assets: a highly reactive chamber orchestra of the first rank and an acumen as a Mozartian that stands him in good stead, particularly in the ebullient finale, which ends with some of the most unbuttoned playing I've ever heard from this pianist. The wind players are, again, a particular delight but they don't hog the limelight; every orchestral texture has been considered and you can almost hear them listening to one another and to the strings.

It's in the Fourth Concerto that the strings come into their own, their virtually vibrato-free playing colouring the orchestral response to the piano's solo opening to striking effect. Andsnes himself is crisper, less veiled than Uchida at the outset, but full of portent for what is to come. Brendel opens with a sigh, Rattle responding with a whisper. The greater clarity of texture of the Mahler CO's forces is not to imply in any way a lack of gravitas or drama. The contrast between full orchestra, *fortissimo*, and the most hushed moments in the work is every bit as potent as that achieved by Rattle's VPO or Sanderling's Concertgebouw. And such is the clarity of thought that I find myself noticing details I've never heard before. Andsnes's cadenza in the first movement of the Fourth is so full of incident and subtlety, as well as an unobtrusive virtuosity, that it would be possible to devote the whole review to it. Better to hear it for yourself.

Nothing would persuade me to part with Gilels and Ludwig – ever – but Andsnes gives them a real run for their money, especially in the emotional pacing of the slow movement. And here again the next-to-no-vibrato colouring of the strings is very effective. The lolling pace set for the finale feels just right and the interplay between pianist and orchestra is as sharply focused as you'd expect. Another extraordinary achievement from all concerned, sound engineers included. Hurray indeed! **Harriet Smith**

Pf Cons – selected comparisons:

Uchida, Bavarian RSO, RCO, K Sanderling

(5/96⁸, 4/98⁸) (PHIL) 475 6757PB3

Brendel, VPO, Rattle (5/99) (PHIL) 462 781-2PH3

Pf Conc No 4 – selected comparison:

Gilels, Philb Orch, Ludwig (3/59⁸, 4/97) (TEST) SBT1095

Beethoven • Schumann

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 5, 'Emperor',

Op 73⁸ Schumann Fantasie, Op 17

Yundi *pf*

°Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Daniel Harding

DG/Mercury © 481 0710DH (67' • DDD)



The coupling of Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto with Schumann's epic

Fantasie is, to say the least, ambitious. The ancient Greeks would have called it piling Pelion on Ossa. It's also unusual, given that recording a concerto alongside an important work from the solo repertoire is a practice which has generally been avoided. True, there is a link between Beethoven

and the *Fantasie*, at whose heart lies a ciphered reference to the theme of the sixth of Beethoven's songs *An die ferne Geliebte* ('To the distant beloved'). But that's a narrative connection, not a musical one.

In 2000 the Chinese-born Yundi Li, as he then was, became the youngest winner since Maurizio Pollini of the International Chopin Competition. He has had a somewhat mixed career on record and this latest CD continues the trend. Of the two works recorded here, it is the Beethoven which is by some distance the more effectively realised. Yundi's incisiveness of touch and certainty of manner is strikingly apparent in what is an unashamedly keyboard-led performance, the piano flatteringly lit by the engineers. All that is lacking is the registration of some of what Neville Cardus once called 'those fallings away, those vanishings of tone which are Beethoven's spiritual secret'.

The Schumann is not in the same league. One of the hastiest performances ever committed to disc, and one of the loudest, it doesn't begin to engage the work as the riven confessional it so movingly is.

It would be unfair to take Yundi to task for the performance's manifold failings – the muddled voicings, the insensitive phrasing, the crude accelerations – when it's clear that, as yet, much of the piece is little more to him than notes on a page. As pianists as various as Richter, Curzon, Kempff, Arrau and Pollini have eloquently proved, there are many ways of approaching this torrential yet ultimately serene masterwork. This isn't one of them.

Richard Osborne

Beethoven • Berg

Beethoven Violin Concerto, Op 61

Berg Violin Concerto

Antje Weithaas *vn*

Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Steven Sloane

AVI-Music © AVI8553305 (68' • DDD)



This issue faces strong competition from the Gramophone Award-winning recording of the same two works by Isabelle Faust, with Abbado and the Orchestra Mozart. And I have to say that Faust is still the one to go for. In place of the clear, crisp Stavanger recording, the Orchestra Mozart has a more alluring sound, warm and blended. And there's a consistently inspired quality to the playing that's not quite maintained in the new version. In the finale of the Beethoven, Abbado and his orchestra give the Rondo theme a uniquely springy, joyful

character, and at the start of the second movement of the Berg, Faust, more assertive than Weithaas, imparts a more compelling vision of frantic struggle.

However, viewing the new recording on its own terms, there's much to admire. Weithaas, a particularly thoughtful violinist, subtly makes us aware of the Viennese waltz rhythms that pervade the latter part of the Berg's first movement. And, through extreme delicacy, soloist and orchestra give the recall of the Carinthian folk melody near the end of the concerto a quite magical quality.

Similarly, in the first movement of the Beethoven, Weithaas, playing very quietly, makes the approach to the recapitulation appear wonderfully mysterious (tr 1, 12'15"), and there are similar breathtaking moments throughout the concerto. She's particularly convincing at giving the music a sense of free improvisation, for instance at her initial entry; and because she's so often concerned to play quietly, the sections where she unleashes virtuoso power stand out with dramatic force. These are distinctive, considered performances, well worth hearing. **Duncan Druce**

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Faust, Orch Mozart, Abbado

(3/12) (HARM) HMC90 2105

Beethoven • Schubert • Wagner

Beethoven Symphony No 2, Op 36^a

Schubert Symphony No 8, 'Unfinished', D759^b

Wagner Siegfried Idyll^a

^aChamber Orchestra of Europe; ^bVienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Claudio Abbado

Audite ④ AUDITE95 627 (78' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Kunsthau, Lucerne,

^bSeptember 5, 1978; ^aAugust 25, 1988



Interesting that the symphony included here that is played by the Chamber

Orchestra of Europe Claudio Abbado recorded with the Vienna Philharmonic, and the work he plays with the Vienna Philharmonic he recorded with the COE. I loved this performance of the *Unfinished* – so much more tension than on the COE recording, and although the first-movement repeat is omitted (it is included on the later version), such is the high level of concentration achieved that in a sense you hardly need the music a second time around. There are some wonderful *pianissimos* too, especially at the onset of the development section. The beautifully paced *Siegfried Idyll* is another gem, again

graced by some exceptionally sensitive playing: the closing pages in particular are superbly done.

In the case of Beethoven's Second Symphony, there are now four Abbado options to choose from: DG's recording with the Vienna Philharmonic (the closest in proximity to the current release) and two versions from the turn of the present century, one on CD, the other on DVD, and both with the Berlin Philharmonic. Although this COE 'first release' is typically transparent, with lively playing and an expressively balanced *Larghetto*, I'm a little bothered by one or two tiny mannerisms. For example, there's a short pause before the *Scherzo's* Trio (there isn't on either the Vienna and Berlin versions); the *sforzando* chord at bar 95 isn't played *sforzando* (it is in Berlin) and Abbado cues an odd little halting gesture just prior to the end of the Trio, a trick he also plays in Vienna but not in Berlin (it really doesn't work anyway). Then again in Berlin, for the initial repeat of the *Scherzo's* woodwind theme Abbado implies an 'echo' by playing the passage more quietly than before. He also includes, uniquely for him, the post-Trio repeat. Though hardly of great import, these are fascinating details that give the lie to the idea that as a general rule Abbado didn't so much 'interpret' as report the musical facts: there's plenty of interpretation on show here. Definitely worthwhile for the Schubert and Wagner; but if your main priority is Abbado's Beethoven Second, stick with one or other of his lighter-textured Berlin versions.

Rob Cowan

Beethoven – selected comparison:

VPO, Abbado (4/88, 9/89) (DG)

➔ 423 590-2GH or 427 306-2GH6

BPO, Abbado (11/08) (DG) 477 5864GM5

BPO, Abbado (5/09) (MEDI) DVD 205 7378

Schubert – selected comparison:

COE, Abbado (2/89^b) (DG) 423 655-2GH

Bloch • Caplet • Ravel

Bloch Schelomo. Voice in the Wilderness

Caplet Epiphanie **Ravel** Kaddisch

Raphael Wallfisch w/ BBC National

Orchestra of Wales / Benjamin Wallfisch

Nimbus ④ NI5913 (75' • DDD)



There are few composers of such profound sincerity and absorbing interest as Ernest Bloch. He said that he had no desire to archive the music of the Jews but that the intention in his own music was to capture the Hebrew spirit

in 'the complex, ardent, agitated soul that vibrates in the Bible'.

In *Schelomo*, the Hebrew word for Solomon, the cellist Raphael Wallfisch communicates the sombre message of the great king in the book of Ecclesiastes, that 'all is vanity'. Bloch's *Schelomo* is by turns devotional, majestic, introspective and dramatic, and the cellist captures all these facets in an astonishing portrait. The orchestra are in fine form under the soloist's son, who keeps a clear head in a complex score, ensuring that every detail is in focus, the climaxes awesome.

The symphonic poem *Voice in the Wilderness* has no biblical link though the title suggests a kinship; likewise the modal idiom of Middle Eastern music and the calling of the shofar (ram's horn) in the orchestration. There are six meditations, in which the cello takes the role of commentator on the preceding music, as it journeys from world-weariness to 'the victory of the spirit', with father and son perfectly partnering each other as they traverse the emotional contours of this strangely moving piece.

The delicate imagery of *Epiphanie* by André Caplet is a fine contrast to the Bloch pieces. It depicts the arrival of the black king Caspar to honour 'the King of the world'. The French composer creates a fascinating oriental sound world that the cello first embroiders, then dominates, taking the central role in a long cadenza over a drum-beat in the middle movement, before an exotic final dance for the king's young retainers. The musical narrative is realised in a beautiful performance. Ravel's *Kaddisch*, his deeply felt homage to Jewish music, carries an authentic ring and completes this memorable recording which is dedicated to the many members of the Wallfisch family who perished in the Holocaust. **Adrian Edwards**

Blower • Holbrooke • Howell

'British Composers Premiere Collections, Vol 1'

Blower Symphony **Holbrooke** Variations on

'The Girl I Left Behind Me' **Howell** Lamia

Karelia State Philharmonic Orchestra /

Marius Stravinsky

Cameo ④ CC9037CD (63' • DDD)

Blower • Gaze Cooper • FS Kelly • Milford

'British Composers Premiere Collections, Vol 2'

Blower Eclogue^a. Horn Concerto^a

Gaze Cooper Concertino, Op 78^b

FS Kelly Serenade, Op 7^c **Milford** Suite^b

^aRebecca Hall ^bJohn McDonough ^{ob}

^aJosé García Gutiérrez ^{rn}

Malta Philharmonic Orchestra / Michael Laus

Cameo ④ CC9032CD (68' • DDD)



Rarities galore jostle for attention on these anthologies. Vol 1 launches in propitious fashion with the tone-poem *Lamia* by Handsworth-born Dorothy Howell (1898-1982). Championed by and dedicated to Sir Henry Wood, it won the 21-year-old composer instant acclaim – and deservedly so, given its precocious skill, melodic fecundity and notably adroit orchestration. Next comes the Symphony in C by Maurice Blower (1894-1982), the manuscript of which was found among his papers by his son, Thomas, and subsequently edited by him and Peter Craddock, who directed the first performance in 2008. Completed in 1938 and cast in four movements, it's an endearingly lyrical, 35-minute canvas of no mean fluency and craft, firmly in the British symphonic tradition, albeit with an affectionate nod or two towards Scandinavia, France and pre-Revolutionary Russia. Joseph Holbrooke's outrageously mischievous Variations on 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' (1905) brings one or two shaky moments from the otherwise spirited Karelia State PO under Marius Stravinsky's appreciative lead. A shame the cavernous sound is so unappetising.

Two highly attractive, pastoral-tinged works for horn and strings by Blower also frame the contents of the companion CD, his *Eclogue* and the 1951 Concerto that was first given by Dennis Brain (no less) at the 1953 Petersfield Music Festival. Both Robin Milford's wholly captivating 1924 Suite (think RVW meets Warlock) and the scarcely less fetching Concertino by Walter Gaze Cooper (1895-1981) are scored for solo oboe and strings; the latter was premiered by Evelyn Rothwell (aka Lady Barbirolli) in October 1957. That only leaves the charming Serenade for solo flute, horn, harp and strings of Frederick Septimus Kelly (1881-1916), a five-movement offering from 1911 by this Sydney-born figure who fought at Gallipoli and perished on the Somme. Happily, this disc brings with it an improvement in performance and production values, with exemplary solo contributions throughout and some eager (if not always ideally tidy) playing from the Malta PO under Michael Laus. Anglophiles who enjoy venturing well off the beaten track will find rich pickings here. **Andrew Achenbach**

Causton

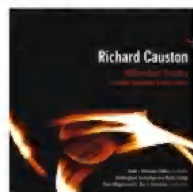
Millennium Scenes^a. Notturmo^b. As Kingfishers Catch Fire^b. The Persistence of Memory^c. Chamber Symphony^c

^bBirmingham Contemporary Music Group /

^bGerry Cornelius, "Ryan Wigglesworth;

^aHallé Orchestra / Nicholas Collon

NMC © NMCD192 (77' • DDD)



Although Richard Causton provides extensive and interesting programme notes to enhance one's appreciation and understanding of the orchestral and chamber works contained on this disc, his music clearly speaks for itself. *Millennium Scenes*, which opens the disc, is a 16-minute piece for large orchestra, divided into 12 short continuous sections. The first one, *Feroce*, pits unison string melodies against jagged percussion gestures and sounds of nature. Massive dissonant textures pile up in the brief *Largo*, followed by a petulant dance featuring aggressive hand drums and exotic-sounding rapid woodwind flourishes. Part 2's first three sections generally manipulate slow-moving tone clusters, while its Coda recapitulates material from the first section along with strategic silences.

Notturmo's spacious, introspective first two movements feature memorably evocative solo passages for piano and viola supported by billowy ensemble chording that shifts around to subtle effect. But don't get too relaxed, for the third movement's opening will wake you up with its busy low-register piano activity and percussive string rejoinders. *As Kingfishers Catch Fire* is scored for flute, clarinet, harp and string quartet, and its twisted, deconstructed faux-Renaissance evocations are underlined by intimate, close-up sound that brings the listener within licking distance of the instruments, adding intensity to note attacks during the energetic harp and *pizzicato* string interplay midway through the piece. By contrast, *The Persistence of Memory*'s sparse textures and delicate scoring will either hold the listener in rapt suspense or convey a static aura, depending on one's listening mood.

Imagine the musical equivalent of TV channel-surfing where one changes stations every minute or so, and you'll understand the alternating bold and gentle gestures that give the 24-minute Chamber Symphony a feeling of controlled discontinuity. The composer's huge dynamic contrasts and complex rhythms obviously pose no problems in

performances that stand out for their executional finesse, painstaking balances and commitment. **Jed Distler**

Dusapin

Reverso (Solo No 6). Uncut (Solo No 7).

Morning in Long Island

Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra / Myung-Whun Chung

DG/Discovery © 481 0786 (62' • DDD)



Although he has been well served on disc, this is the first release on a 'major' label devoted to Pascal Dusapin (b1955), and it proves a fine demonstration of just what has made him a leading European composer among his generation. Two of these works form the final stages of his seven-part *Solos* cycle. *Reverso* (2007) is most notable for an improvisatory feel where the gradually intensifying foreground activity is held in check before being subsumed into the impassive linear flow which underlies it, while *Uncut* (2009) makes for a heady culmination to the cycle as a whole, with its accumulating fanfares and its inexorable progress towards a climactic 'wall' of silence. Both pieces have already been recorded as part of the complete cycle, with Pascal Rophé's often impulsive and volatile approach complementing the more methodical and slow-burning though no less involving accounts from Myung-Whun Chung.

Morning in Long Island (2010) is itself the first in a three-part *Concerts* cycle. Inspired by Dusapin's encounter a quarter of a century ago with the region off America's East Coast, its three continuous movements outline a 'concerto for orchestra' of evident subtlety and invention. The opening 'Fragile' sets out the translucent harmonic and enticing melodic premises, its abstraction tempered by fugitive activity from percussion in a brief interlude that leads into the central 'Simplement'. Here the elaboration of ideas so far encountered and the music's overall expressive remoteness is countered by increasingly ominous climaxes in which the orchestra – spurred on by offstage horn, trumpet and trombone – conjures forth images of elemental ferocity. The final movement, 'Swinging', then imparts a tangible human presence through its intricate rhythmic interplay such as rapidly draws in the entire forces on the way to a propulsive ending: nature and humanity brought into visceral though transient accord.

The reading here is as assured as expected from one of the finest orchestras in the French-speaking world and a conductor whose advocacy of post-war music is second to none, with sound that presents this highly evocative music in the best possible light. Hopefully Chung and the OPRF will go on to record the other *Concerts* and *Solos*; in the meantime, this disc is warmly recommended as the most significant release of new music from DG in some while. **Richard Whitehouse**

Reverse, Uncut – comparative version:

*Orch de Liège Wallonie Bruxelles, Ropbé
(8/10) (NAIV) MO782180*

Dvořák • Schumann

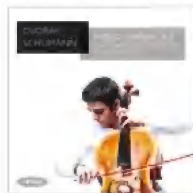
Dvořák Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191

Schumann Cello Concerto, Op 129

Traditional El cant dels ocells (arr Casals)

Pablo Ferrández vs **Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra / Radoslaw Szulc**

Onyx ① ONYX4127 (68' • DDD)



Pablo Ferrández launches his performance of the Schumann Cello

Concerto with an unusual degree of diffidence and introspection. On first hearing, this seemed to represent a fundamental flaw in that, with a certain amount of *rubato* in the phrasing, it failed to establish a sense of purposeful, forward motion. However, on repeated listening the thinking behind the interpretation became clearer, or at least more conjecturable. Ferrández sees the solo cello as the voice of rumination and reverie, with the orchestra as the wake-up element interjecting with more emphatically articulated gestures. He thus makes more of an emotional link between the first movement and the central slow one than is often the case, springing perkily into life for the finale while preserving an intimacy of scale. This view will not appeal to those who prefer a more dynamic approach to this concerto but it has an underlying sense of reason, intensifying the music's quiet demeanour.

Ferrández is certainly more outgoing in the Dvořák, suggesting that his stance on the Schumann is the result of a conscious, personal response. The orchestra announce ripe intent at the start of the Dvořák, with Radoslaw Szulc encouraging suppleness in the colouring and shaping. Thereafter, his fusion of flair with the sensibility that is one of his strongest suits makes for a performance that has a keen dramatic impulse tempered with warmth and an expressive finesse. **Geoffrey Norris**

Dvořák

Dvořák Symphony No 8, Op 88 B163⁸.

String Quartet No 12, 'American', Op 96 B179 (arr D Walter)⁶

⁸Royal Flemish Philharmonic Wood Quintet;

⁶Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra / Edo de Waart

Royal Flemish Philharmonic ① RFP005 (62' • DDD)



In the case of the Eighth Symphony, initial impressions are wholly favourable and for the most part firmly substantiated by what follows. The artful shaping of the slow introduction, the balance of winds and strings, the skilful transition to the principal *Allegro* and the way climaxes are charted with only the subtlest suggestion of broadening for dramatic effect (ie at 7'47"), all suggest insightful collaboration. You hear absolutely everything and Edo de Waart's acute sense of tonal colour makes creative capital out of every significant key change. As to Dvořák's instrumentation, and the way de Waart traces it, listen in particular to the bassoon at 8'07" into the second movement or the trilling horns in the finale. Only the *Allegretto con grazioso* struck me as a little too formal; otherwise I would call this a well-played, well-paced, finely detailed and admirably energetic reading of the symphony, extremely well recorded.

My personal choice for a disc companion would have been another symphony or maybe a couple of Dvořák's bigger concert overtures. David Walter's wind quintet arrangement of the *American* String Quartet works best in the last two movements, where dancing rhythms predominate and the switch from string to wind textures seems fairly comfortable. However, in the first two movements the unique expressive resources afforded by a quartet of strings, including a degree of edge and vibrancy, are an essential part of Dvořák's ground plan and here winds tend to smooth away the music's rugged contours so that, although the playing itself is excellent, it all begins to sound rather bland and uninvolved. Listen for comparison to Dvořák's great Wind Serenade and you soon realise how skilfully he allocated different varieties of material for strings and for winds. So 'half a hit' for the quartet/quintet, and enough of a thumbs-up for the symphony to prompt a further helping of symphonic Dvořák from the same source.

Rob Cowan

Gál • Schumann

Gál Symphony No 1, Op 30

Schumann Symphony No 1, 'Spring', Op 38

Orchestra of the Swan / Kenneth Woods

Avie ① AV2233 (61' • DDD)



Time was there were no Gál symphonies in the catalogue (indeed, precious little of his

music at all), yet with this disc we now have not just two recordings of the First (1927) but the first integral cycle of the four. All credit to Avie or issuing these (including the rival accounts of Nos 1 and 2 conducted by Thomas Zehetmair). The First Symphony is a vibrantly Classical (not neo-classical) score written by a young master in the traditional medium also espoused by Franz Schmidt, whose Third Symphony pipped Gál's First in the Austrian section of the Columbia Graphophone Company's Schubert Centenary Competition.

The four movements follow a conventional pattern with the 'Burleske' *scherzo* placed second. Woods and the Orchestra of the Swan have Gál's style so completely under their hands now that they sound as if they had been playing this music all their lives. Zehetmair and the Northern Sinfonia set a high benchmark in their pioneering account and it remains a fine account, but the newcomer surpasses it. Compare just the opening bars, where Woods and the Swan players achieve a smoothness of flow to Gál's opening that leaves Zehetmair's sounding a tad lacking, or the opening *Moderato*'s close with its unlikely foreshadowing of Shostakovich. This account is a joy to hear from start to exuberant finish, perfectly paced and superbly played.

The coupling of Schumann's *Spring* Symphony is a delight, too. There is no obvious connection between the two works but the Orchestra of the Swan play it as if the pairing were the most natural in the world, giving Zinman and the Tonhalle a real run for their money. Avie's sound is splendidly balanced, warm and clear. Very strongly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Gál – comparative version:

Northern Sinf, Zehetmair (8/11) (AVTE) AV2224

Schumann – selected comparison:

Zürich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman

(5/04) (ARTN) 82876 57743-2

Glière

Symphony No 3, 'Ilya Muromets'

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta

Naxos ③ 8 573161 (72' • DDD)



There have now been something near 20 recordings of *Ilya Muromets*, a

symphony once popular largely through Stokowski's championship of it in America and its exaltation in Soviet times as embodying a Russian tradition with ready appeal. Glière was in fact not a Russian of Belgian descent, as the booklet-note says, but of German descent (Glier) and Ukrainian birth. However, the *Russian Musical Encyclopedia* claims him as 'Soviet'; and his symphony of 1911, with its glorification of a remote and semi-mythical hero and its succulent melodic style and lush orchestration, came to suit the tenets of Socialist Realism. He won many official medals, which he liked to wear, conducting concerts as they clinked merrily.

Glière's models included Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov, and he was expert enough to capitalise successfully on the former's orchestral skill with colourful legends and something of the latter's harmonic manner. The result is lush and vivid, following the detail of a fantastic set of events with plenty of matching orchestral fantasy. They include the defeat of a fearful brigand called Solovey ('nightingale'), perhaps sarcastically named as his principal weapon against his adversaries was a deafening whistle, and the eventual defeat of Ilya's forces and their turning to stone, at the hands of an ecclesiastical chant, when he was rash enough to challenge the hosts of Heaven to battle.

JoAnn Falletta is a keen admirer and has an excellent ear not merely for clarifying and controlling the orchestral sumptuousness but for articulating the events dramatically. Her forces cast themselves into the fray with enthusiasm and virtuosity, and the recording engineers rise to some quite demanding occasions.

John Warrack

KA Hartmann

Symphonies - No 1, 'Versuch eines Requieles'; No 2, 'Adagio'; No 3^b; No 4^c; No 5, 'Sinfonia concertante'; No 6^e; No 7^f; No 8^g

^aKismara Pessati *contr* ^{abcefg}Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra; ^dNetherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic / ^bJames Gaffigan; ^eIngo Metzmacher; ^fChristoph Poppen; ^gMichael Schönwandt; ^{ac}Markus Stenz; ^hOsmo Vänskä
Challenge Classics (CD) CC72583
(3h 19' • DDD). Recorded live 2012-13



Why a cycle of Karl Amadeus Hartmann symphonies led by six different conductors?

Challenge Classics reveals surprisingly little about the source of these recordings but a question filed down the information superhighway quickly reveals their provenance – a Netherlands Radio celebration of Hartmann to mark last year's 50th anniversary of his death.

We all have our pet composers but Hartmann's sound world is so brazenly all-encompassing and expressively rich that the question of his relative neglect, at least here in the UK, never goes away. He wrote eight bona fide symphonies that palpably evolved the form. He was in the thick of new-music activity in Germany, his Musica Viva helping promote the careers of emerging composers – Ligeti, Xenakis and Nono – while his own music occupied faraway terrain of its own. Sometimes Hartmann's orchestration – obstreperous, shrill woodwind and shock-and-awe percussion – foretells Xenakis and Birtwistle, while everything he wrote was rooted in harmony that you could supply unfailingly with chord symbols: Mahler and Berg are never that far from the surface. He was an instinctive modern thinker but never a dogmatic modernist.

I thought it worth dwelling on Hartmann's background to underline the challenges posed by his multi-headed music – answering, perhaps, my own question about his neglect. Of the six conductors chosen for this project, Metzmacher – whose 1999 cycle of the complete symphonies on EMI revived interest in Hartmann – has the most credentials, and his performance of the Eighth (1960-62) is rowdier and looser than his earlier view. Its compacted structure – two movements compressed into 23 minutes – gets to the essence of Hartmann: an ever-expanding viola solo in the first movement, lovingly shaped by Metzmacher, that bumps heads with a contracting structure, put against a tenebrous, menacing, stampeding march finale.

The Third Symphony (1949), despite another two-movement structure, represents Hartmann at his most expansive. The duties here fall to James Gaffigan, who claws open the symphony with a confidence not quite heard elsewhere. I like the way Gaffigan keeps each individual line in the opening string counterpoint alive and self-sufficient – no mean feat – while the subsequent fugal crisis takes furious flight.

Haitink at 85 / Chamber Orchestra of Europe

5 & 7 Jun

In celebration of his 85th birthday, Bernard Haitink is joined by soloists **Isabelle Faust** and **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** to explore works from Mozart, Beethoven, Ravel and Schumann.

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Personally, I find the consciously neo-classical Fifth Symphony (1950) – Stravinsky reaching over to shake hands with Eisler – the weak link in any Hartmann cycle, and Schönwandt, thank goodness, avoids soft-pedalling the piece.

Gaffigan's take on the Second Symphony (1945–46) spills fearlessly between punky expressionism and Mahlerian lyrical repose, while Markus Stenz's view of the Fourth (1947–48) deals well with its problematic narrative structure, the plain tonality of the last movement clearly shaken by the preceding atonal rough-and-tumble.

Philip Clark

Hosokawa

'Orchestral Works, Vol 1'

Horn Concerto, 'Moment of Blossoming'.

Lotus Under the Moonlight (Hommage à

Mozart)^b. Chant^c

^aStefan Dohr *hn* ^cAnssi Karttunen *vc*

^bMomo Kodama *pf*

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Jun Märkl

Naxos © 8 573239 (59' • DDD)



A long sustained note, passing imperceptibly to the horn around 1'20", and surrounded

by distant percussion, puts us firmly in the sound world of Japanese music, full of direct allusions to the natural world – especially wind and water – and strongly scented by musical images of lotus blossom. Stefan Dohr, for whom Toshio Hosokawa composed his Horn Concerto *Moment of Blossoming* in 2010, is clearly at one with the composer's vision of the lotus flower's growth as an allegory for mankind's passage through life, and as the pitches widen out and the surrounding textures become more complex, his strongly focused presence, depicting the flower's growth from roots deep underwater to bursting out, to quote Hosokawa's booklet-note, into 'beautiful jewel-like blossoms', is utterly compelling. Less so is the playing of the RSO under Jun Märkl. While the orchestra effortlessly brush aside the score's huge technical challenges, only occasionally (as in a magical moment around 15'45") does Märkl successfully evoke the weightless mysticism of Hosokawa's writing.

A cello concerto in all but name, *Chant* is inspired by the ceremonial music of Japanese Buddhism. A complex and musically demanding score, Anssi Karttunen is thoroughly attuned to Hosokawa's musical vision, although again I am not entirely sure that Märkl

is quite so sympathetic to the idiom, and the orchestral support is, at times, solidly earthbound.

The third of these 20-minute, single-movement concertos is by far and away the most successful, helped enormously by Japanese pianist Momo Kodama, for whom Hosokawa wrote his piano concerto *Lotus Under the Moonlight* in 2006. She holds us in thrall throughout; and while the music is again inspired again by the lotus flower, distant allusions to the slow movement of Mozart's 23rd Piano Concerto give it a more clearly defined outline, to which Märkl responds unreservedly, drawing magically delicate colours and rich textural intricacies from what is a profoundly attractive score. **Marc Rochester**

Kletzki • Lutosławski • Szymanowski

Kletzki Violin Concerto, Op 19

Lutosławski Partita

Szymanowski Violin Concerto No 2, Op 61

Robert Davidovici *vn*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Grzegorz Nowak

RPO © RPOSP045 (75' • DDD)



Paul Kletzki enjoyed a burgeoning career as a composer and conductor in 1920s

Berlin. His 1928 Violin Concerto was widely played before 1933, when he was forced to leave Germany, moving first to Italy, then Switzerland. His German publisher destroyed his compositions and Kletzki's personal copies, stored in a Milan bank vault, were thought to have been lost in a bombing raid, only to turn up when the bank's site was redeveloped in the 1960s.

This first recording reveals a large-scale, virtuoso work, brilliantly scored and full of striking ideas. There are many beautiful passages yet, to my ears, the music fails to develop into a compelling narrative. There's an issue of stylistic identity, too: the opening bars suggest Brahms; other places move towards 1920s objectivity or Straussian sensuality. However, the mixture is an intriguing one, especially in the finale, with its suggestions of cabaret music.

Robert Davidovici gives a strong, confident performance of all three works (barring occasional uncomfortable moments in some double-stopped passages in the Kletzki), and he's very well supported by the RPO. The orchestral sound is splendid and, inspired by Nowak, the players give an air of eagerness and enthusiasm. It's a recording to be

recommended, then, though if your main interest is the Szymanowski, I'd suggest you investigate Thomas Zehetmair's performance with Rattle and the CBSO; they bring out all the work's subtleties, with Zehetmair more eloquent in his projection of the melodic lines. **Duncan Druce**
Szymanowski – selected comparison:
Zehetmair, CBSO, Rattle (8/96) (EMI) 514576-2

Linkola • Matvejeff

Linkola Piano Concerto No 1, 'The Masquerade'^a

Matvejeff *Ad astra*. Cello Concerto, 'Crossroads'^b

^bTuomas Lehto *vc* ^aHenri Sigfridsson *pf* Turku

Philharmonic Orchestra / Dima Slobodeniouk

Alba © ABCD364 (71' • DDD)



Where many composers are wary of revealing the detailed programmes behind

their works, Jukka Linkola (*b*1955) must be unique in providing a fictional scenario for his First Piano Concerto, *The Masquerade* (2011). Indeed, his booklet-note for Alba's release reads like a short story, complete with happy-ever-after ending.

The Masquerade is perhaps best thought of as a 42-minute symphonic poem in five movements requiring a virtuoso solo pianist (who features prominently in Linkola's story). In style it is an extension of the concerto tradition of the 19th and early 20th centuries, as exemplified by Rachmaninov, Prokofiev and Selim Palmgren, without the self-conscious postmodernism of Iiro Rantala's Concerto (Ondine). Those familiar with Linkola's other concertos may be taken aback by the music's sumptuousness of scale, texture and imagery.

Ville Matvejeff (*b*1986) is also not shy about revealing his sources. *Ad astra* (2008–09) was inspired by Akseli Gallen-Kallala's painting of the same name (not reproduced on the cover or in the booklet; the Hubble Telescope photo does not really compensate). The music charts an appealing course from darkness to light in an effective concert opener. His single-span Cello Concerto *Crossroads* (2009) is a tribute to heavy metal rock music (its subtitle is 'Fantasy in a heavy style'). The idea is not new, as Matvejeff concedes – Friedrich Gulda got there three decades earlier – but Matvejeff follows a different course. The performances are outstanding all round: vivid playing of three attractive works, rendered in excellent sound. Recommended especially for those who think they are afraid of contemporary music. **Guy Rickards**

Mansurian

Double Concerto^a. Romance^b. Quasi parlando^c.
Violin Concerto No 2, 'Four Serious Songs'^b
^aPatricia Kopatchinskaja ^{vi} ^aAnja Lechner ^{vc}
Amsterdam Sinfonietta / Candida Thompson
ECM New Series © 481 0667 (71' • DDD)



ECM's fourth release devoted to Tigran Mansurian (75 this year) focuses on his

concertante music for string orchestra from the past decade. Most imposing is the Double Concerto, in which violin and cello combine over two movements – the first building to a febrile confrontation before withdrawing into the shadows, then the second bringing a sustained and intense discourse, with the soloists inexorably drawn into the enveloping string textures. Both shorter pieces sound tailor-made for the soloists in question: *Romance* unfolds as an initially lyrical dialogue whose poise is not regained after an agitated central phase, while *Quasi parlando* pursues a more discursive exchange well suited to the thoughtful artistry of Anja Lechner.

The emotional acuity of Patricia Kopatchinskaja's playing is further

demonstrated in *Four Serious Songs*, a concerto whose teasingly oblique assembly of formal elements is evident in a follow-through from the impassiveness of the opening movement, via the increasingly fractious gestures of its successor and the glowering unison writing of the ensuing *Allegro* (its single minute bringing the only fast music on this disc), to a finale whose inwardness readily affords the serenity implied by its *semplice* marking.

Throughout the programme, the playing of the Amsterdam Sinfonietta – as directed by Candida Thompson – reinforces the impressive showing from its series of recordings for Channel Classics, while both the spacious yet never remote sound and the detailed booklet-notes are up to ECM's customary standards. Those intent on exploring the music of this arresting figure could well start here.

Richard Whitehouse

D Matthews

Symphony No 7, Op 109^a. Vespers, Op 66^b

^bKatie Bray *mez* ^aMatthew Long *ten*

^bThe Bach Choir; Bournemouth Symphony

Orchestra / ^aJohn Carewe; ^bDavid Hill

Dutton Epoch © CDLX7305 (69' • DDD)



Commissioned by the BBC Philharmonic, David Matthews's Seventh Symphony

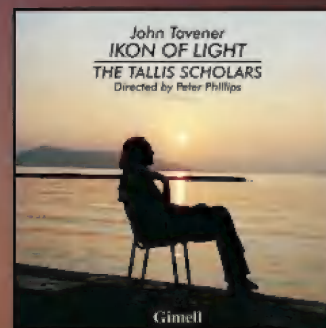
of 2008-09 is a richly inspired, urgently communicative 20-minute canvas in a single movement that looks to the example of Sibelius's Seventh. Like that 20th-century masterpiece, it's a score of slumbering organic power and enormous cumulative impact, whose awesomely inevitable progress incorporates elements of rugged beauty, tender lyricism and eruptive force – the closing pages resound with an exuberant, overwhelmingly 'right' sense of homecoming. What's more, Matthews handles the orchestra with discerning prowess, and anyone who responds to Britten, Tippett or Maw will surely feel right at home.

Inspiration also runs consistently high in the imposing *Vespers* (1993-96) for mezzo-soprano, tenor, SATB choir and orchestra. Here is a work firmly in the lineage of RVW, Holst, Howells, Tippett, Leighton and Mathias (yes, it's that good!) which incorporates some of the Latin texts also set by Monteverdi in his *Vespers* in addition

'Tavener's supremely effective, luminous musical ritual, stunningly performed by The Tallis Scholars'

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Sir John Tavener (1944–2013)

Ikon of Light

with members of the Chilingirian String Quartet

Funeral Ikos

The Lamb conducted by the composer

Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete

'Some of the most profoundly beautiful music I know' Marc Rochester, Re-issue of the Month, *Gramophone* May 2014

'A CD of miracles, and miraculous sounds' Stuart Millson, *The Quarterly Review*

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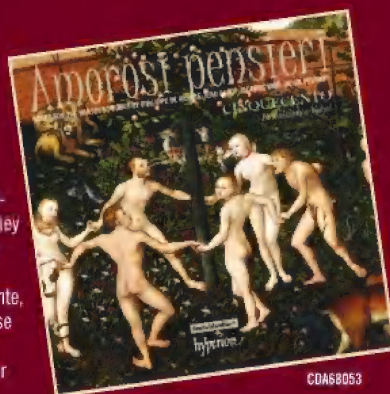
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CAROLYN SAMPSON soprano
EX CATHEDRA / JEFFREY SKIDMORE



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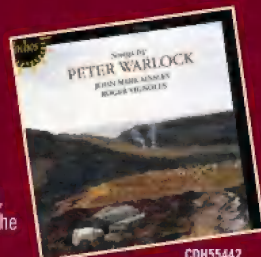


PETER WARLOCK

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ROGER VIGNOLES piano



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LEOŠ JANAČEK

On the overgrown path I

A new album from Marc-André Hamelin is always a cause for celebration. Here he presents three sets of miniatures (all masterpieces in which their emotional impact is quite out of proportion to their dimensions); a fascinating juxtaposition of two composers who are not obviously musically related, but who are proved on this album to be a felicitous combination.

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN piano



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ARTHUR BENJAMIN

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LAWRENCE POWER violin & viola
SIMON CRAWFORD-PHILLIPS piano



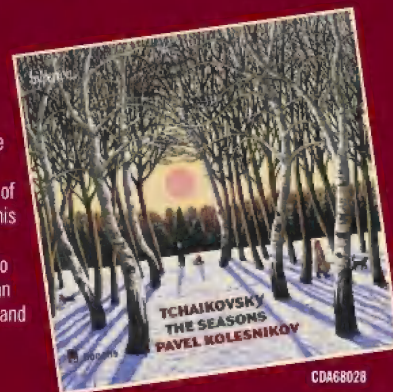
CDAG7969

PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY

The seasons

Russian pianist Pavel Kolesnikov became Laureate of the Honens Prize for Piano in 2012 and gave his Wigmore Hall debut at the beginning of 2013, where the critics delighted in his outstanding pianism and intelligent programming. Hyperion is delighted to present this brilliant young artist in an album of Tchaikovsky's *Les saisons* and *Six morceaux*.

PAVEL KOLESNIKOV piano



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to three poems from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das Stundenbuch* ('The Book of the Hours'), the last of which ('All will grow great and powerful again') caps the whole edifice in nobly affirmative and compassionate fashion. Matthews's 45-minute oratorio possesses a wealth of memorable invention, exploratory zeal and emotional charge; for tangible evidence, make haste to the second movement, 'Alma redemptoris mater', where an incendiary orchestral *scherzo* leads to some heart-stoppingly lovely choral writing; or sample those swaggering dance rhythms of the fourth movement, 'Laudate pueri' (an infectiously joyous treatment of Psalm 113). A mightily impressive find, make no mistake – and another stellar performance, too, this time under the watchful supervision of David Hill.

Andrew Achenbach

Panufnik

'Symphonic Works, Vol 7'

Symphony No 5, 'Sinfonia di Sfere'.

Bassoon Concerto^o. Love Song^o. Landscape^o

'Sarah van der Kemp *mez* Michael von

Schönermark *bn* Berlin Konzerthaus

Orchestra; 'Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Lukasz Borowicz

CPO © CPO777 686-2 (68' • DDD)



The *Sinfonia di Sfere*, Panufnik's Fifth, is of course the main attraction here. It's a

complex work architecturally, the 'spheres' being those of celestial harmony, but interpreted by the composer as a structural cue, so that there are 'spheres' of harmony, of rhythm, dynamics and orchestral sound, which he wished to be understood as 'an ascent into spheres of contemplative thoughts and feelings'. If that sounds like a contradiction between the technical and the mystical, then in some ways it is, in a manner entirely characteristic of the composer. The symphony is certainly 'abstract' in a way sufficient to please the audience at its premiere in 1976 by the LSO under David Atherton, but this alternates with a floating, dream-like quality that makes it highly original.

The first performers of the work subsequently recorded it for Decca in 1978, and this has been reissued on Explore; it is very fine and precise, but the clarity of the new recording allows all the detail of all Panufnik's remarkable scoring, relished at every moment by Borowicz, to come through even more. (There is a further recording under John Storgårds – Ondine, 11/07 – which I have not heard.)

Something that should also be taken into consideration is the fabulous performance here of the Bassoon Concerto, no lightweight at 20 minutes, and certainly one of the greatest conceived for the instrument. It's a darkly dramatic work, written in memory of the murdered Polish Catholic priest Fr Jerzy Popiełuszko in 1985, and is given a powerful, deeply felt rendition here by Michael von Schönermark. The disc is rounded off by the lovely Sydney setting *Love Song*, and *Landscape*, whose anodyne title hides a meditative but tremendously powerful work. Highly recommended. **Ivan Moody**

Sinf di Sfere – selected comparison:

LSO, Atherton (10/06) (EXPL) EXP0014

Petrassi

Flute Concerto^o. Piano Concerto^o.

La follia di Orlando – Symphonic Suite

'Mario Ancillotti *fl* Bruno Canino *pf* Rome

Symphony Orchestra / Francesco La Vecchia

Naxos © 8 573073 (72' • DDD)



'I consider the score a complete failure.'

Thus Goffredo Petrassi on his sole

Piano Concerto, begun in 1936 and premiered three years later in Rome by Walter Gieseking. The great pianist would, one imagines, have revelled in the distinctly Gallic flavour of the extended central 'Arietta con variazioni' – that sublime melody from the slow movement of Ravel's G major Concerto clearly left its mark – but the predominant influences here are Bartók, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and, above all, Stravinsky. (Closer to home, I was even reminded of the piano concertos of both Vaughan Williams and Kenneth Leighton, the latter a distinguished pupil of the Italian master.) For all that it comprises an intriguing, colourful and action-packed canvas, there's no denying the far greater individuality of Petrassi's 1942–43 ballet *La follia di Orlando* (based on episodes from Ariosto's epic poem of 1516, *Orlando furioso*). Naxos gives us the Symphonic Suite that was first heard in December 1945, fully 17 months before the ballet was finally staged at La Scala, Milan, and consistently rewarding listening it makes, too, full of superior invention, and always displaying a refined harmonic sensibility and felicitous understanding of the orchestra.

Entirely different again is the Flute Concerto that Petrassi composed in 1960 for Severino Gazzelloni, a single-movement canvas both innovative in form

and scored with fastidious, ear-pricking subtlety (the unusual instrumentation eschews violins, violas, flutes and oboes, and incorporates a very large percussion section as well as harp and guitar). Petrassi employs his own brand of serialism in this absorbing 20-minute work, which is by no means as forbidding as you might think. First-rate contributions from both soloists and energetic playing from Francesco La Vecchia's Rome band. The sound may not be of the most glamorous but this remains a laudably enterprising release.

Andrew Achenbach

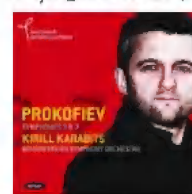
Prokofiev

Symphonies – No 3, Op 44; No 7, Op 131

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra /

Kirill Karabits

Onyx © ONYX4137 (65' • DDD)



This is not the first distinguished Onyx release from the Bournemouth

Symphony Orchestra and its young Ukrainian conductor but it is probably the most significant. The initial instalment of their most ambitious project to date, a complete Prokofiev symphony cycle fleshed out with some of his lesser-known student compositions, it suggests that Valery Gergiev and the LSO will face stiff competition.

Reviewing James Ehnes's Britten and Shostakovich concerto coupling (8/13), Richard Fairman wrote that 'Kirill Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra make cultured colleagues but there is not much danger in their ostinato rhythms or edge to their attack'. While I know what he means, there's more than one way to skin a Russian bear. Those who find a ruthless, high-octane manner unpalatable even in music as inescapably OTT as Prokofiev's Third Symphony will welcome Karabits's cooler, more analytical approach. There can't be many 20th-century pieces outside the core repertoire that have been taken up by Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti and Riccardo Chailly. Even so, I don't think I have heard this score rendered with greater sophistication than it is in the Lighthouse, Poole. Perhaps you can't always perceive the wood for the trees amid the welter of inner detail unearthed. Still, the music emerges refreshed, Prokofiev's often wildly original textural undergrowth and harmonic substructure subverting what in other hands can sound like full-blown romanticism. Violin lines are beautifully

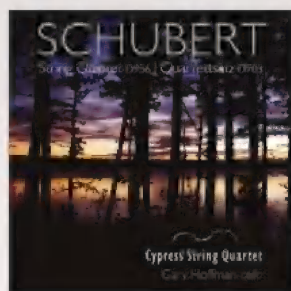


Schubert String Quintet in C *

Quartettsatz in c minor

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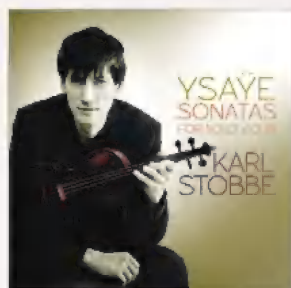


AV 2307

Ysaÿe Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27

Karl Stobbe, violin

Canadian violinist Karl Stobbe makes an indelible mark with his debut recording for AVIE, a bold traversal of Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas for Solo Violin.



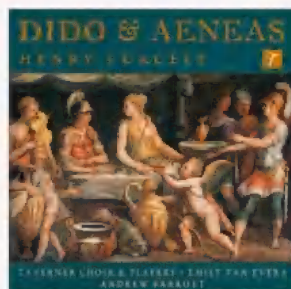
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Andrew Parrott

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shaped without ever saturating the sonic landscape. Save for the Trio of the third movement, tempi are slightly more relaxed than usual.

Gergiev's epic reading of the Seventh is among the highlights of his LSO series, making it seem a worthy Soviet successor to the Fifth and Sixth. Karabits has other, subtler ideas, unfolding Prokofiev's swansong without a trace of heaviness or sentimentality, judging to perfection its uneasy mix of childlike innocence and muted tragedy. The audience-friendly flourish Prokofiev appended to the fragile ending is provided as a quasi-encore, yet another plus. The sound engineering, in what can seem an unhelpfully reverberant venue, is excellent, the sometimes unconventional balances appearing to fulfil the conductor's intentions. The disc lacks conventional notes. Instead there's an extended interview with Karabits. Strongly recommended. **David Gutman**

Selected comparison:

LSO, Gergiev (6/06) (PHIL) 475 7655PM4

Scharwenka

Piano Concertos Nos 1-4

Alexander Markovich *pf* Estonian National

Symphony Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos ② ② CHAN10814 (140' • DDD)



On the surface this Chandos release is to be welcomed for, if you had never

encountered Scharwenka's concertos before, you might be impressed by the string of memorable ideas, the resourceful orchestration, the vigorous athleticism of Alexander Markovich and Neeme Järvi's alert and stylish support. But all four performances fall short of this label's usual exemplary high standards of performance and recording, and, in the two best concertos (Nos 1 and 4), are no competition for, in the former, Earl Wild with Erich Leinsdorf (1969) or Marc-André Hamelin with Michael Stern and, in the latter, Stephen Hough with Lawrence Foster in his *Gramophone* Award-winning recording.

The problem with the newcomer is twofold: Chandos's venue, the Estonia Concert Hall, Tallinn, has a touch of the empty aircraft hangar about it and sounds as if the microphones have been placed in the rear stalls; and Markovich, for all his technical ability and energetic industry, is a far less rhythmically incisive and refined player than Wild, Hamelin or Hough. For instance, compare the first pages of No 1,

in which the soloist wrests attention from the forceful orchestral *tutti* by entering with equal force and *più animato*: Wild grabs the initiative in thrilling fashion; Markovich hesitates and immediately reduces the tension. In the sparkling *Scherzo*, the skittering left-hand run that introduces the second subject is just one example of passagework that is not clearly articulated. In the third movement, there is a misreading at 4'31", and the single C sharp that leads into the exultant final statement of the main theme has a crude augmented dominant chord added to it. The soloist's final blaze of octaves in the coda is indistinguishable beneath the boisterous orchestra. Though Laurence Jeanningros is cautious and underpowered by comparison, she is at least precise and rhythmically secure, as well as being better recorded.

Markovich captures admirably the lyrical repose of the Second Concerto's Chopinesque *Adagio* but is again bettered in the perky *krakowiak*-like finale by the crisper *leggiero* touch of Seta Tanyel, to say nothing of Raymond Lewenthal, who recorded only the finale, though in poorer sound. Tanyel is also to be preferred in Concerto No 3. Markovich redeems himself somewhat in the expansive (19'46") first movement of No 4 with some sensitive phrasing and touch. In the extraordinary tarantella finale, though, where Hough has you on the edge of your seat with dazzling derring-do, Markovich is hard-hitting and poorly organised, reducing the music to a noisy rant. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Pf Conc No 1 – selected comparisons:

Wild, Boston SO, Leinsdorf (2/70*, 7/96) (ELAN)

CD82266; (A/07) (IVOR) 77003

Hamelin, BBC Scottish SO, Stern

(10/05) (HYPE) CDA67508

Pf Concs Nos 1 & 2 – selected comparison:

Jeanningros, Czech Nat SO, Freeman (CENT) CRC2500

Pf Concs Nos 2 & 3 – selected comparison:

Tanyel, NDR Rad PO, Hanover, Strugala

(5/97*, 10/03) (HYPE) CDA67365

Pf Conc No 4 – selected comparison:

Hough, CBSO, Foster (11/95) (HYPE) CDA66790

Shostakovich

Cello Concertos - No 1, Op 107; No 2, Op 126

Truls Mørk *vc*

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko

Online ② ODE1218-2 (64' • DDD)



Truls Mørk signs in at the opening of Shostakovich's First Concerto with a fine combination of swiftness and grit, helped

by a recorded balance that places him well to the fore. Both his playing and his interpretation are of a quality that immediately demands comparison with the finest on disc, so that choice becomes largely a matter of personal preference.

He and Petrenko certainly find the combination of weight and impetus that is *de rigueur* in these pieces. There is, perhaps, a fraction less effort and struggle, and a touch more precision, than with Müller-Schott and Kreizberg. And in that respect Mørk is closer to Heinrich Schiff than to the other listed comparisons. Maisky is alone in romanticising his way around corners, which I find hard to take on repeated hearing.

I was surprised at Mørk's smooth *glissando* octaves in the Second Concerto, where others get closer to the notated articulation and to more dramatic effect. But that really is just an isolated moment. Far more important is the sweep and large-scale integrity of both performances. The Oslo Philharmonic's contributions are outstanding, with top-class horn obbligatos in the first concerto. The 'Bartók' *pizzicatos* around 4'00" in the first movement of the First Concerto may not be in the score but they are certainly effective.

Two issues nag at the back of my mind. The obvious one is that Rostropovich set the bar so high with his classic recordings (now in so many incarnations as to defy listing, though not available on a single disc). No one covers the emotional gamut from dazed fragility to militant defiance with the sheer authority he does. Less obviously, the closeness of the Ondine recording comes at the expense of natural acoustic perspective, making some of the *tuttis* more noisy than vehement.

David Fanning

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Schiff, Bavarian RSO, M Shostakovich

(10/85*) (PHIL) 475 7575POR or 475 2602PTR3

Maisky, LSO, Tison Thomas (4/95) (DG) 445 821-2GH

Müller-Schott, Bavarian RSO, Kreizberg

(10/08) (ORFE) C659 081A

Shostakovich

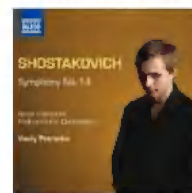
Symphony No 14, Op 135

Gal James *sop* Alexander Vinogradov *bar*

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /

Vasily Petrenko

Naxos ③ 8 573132 (50' • DDD • T/t)



However uncompromising its moral and ideological outlook, the self-evident musical distinction of Shostakovich's

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

SIBELIUS FROM STORGÅRDS

Andrew Achenbach listens to the Sibelius symphonies recorded in Manchester by John Storgårds and his BBC Philharmonic charges



Feisty and pungent: John Storgårds conducts Sibelius, including the 'fragments' he introduced in Helsinki

Since his appointment in January 2012 as the BBC Philharmonic's principal guest conductor, John Storgårds has been programming plenty of Sibelius with his new colleagues, culminating in a cycle of all seven numbered symphonies last summer in Manchester's Bridgewater Hall. That he is a Sibelian of trusty instinct is amply confirmed by this three-CD box from Chandos, which also contains Timo Virtanen's transcription of three orchestral sketches that were found in a huge body of papers left by the composer, held in Finland's National Library. Storgårds gave these tantalising morsels their very first play-through with his own Helsinki PO back in October 2011, and what fascinating hearing they make – the first fragment operating at a higher level of dissonance than you might imagine and the last (perhaps less surprisingly) reminiscent of ideas heard in *The Tempest* and *Tapiola* (I also detect intriguing pre-echoes of Kokkonen and Sallinen). As Virtanen states in the booklet, we can never know for certain whether they were intended for the ill-fated Eighth Symphony but the documentary evidence suggests as much, and they do make you reflect upon how Sibelius's musical syntax might have developed.

On to the main bill of fare, then, and I find much to savour in this team's accounts of the first two symphonies. John Bradbury's bardic clarinet solo at the outset

of No 1 immediately compels you to listen with fresh ears, thereby setting the template for a reading of striking sweep, feisty emotional scope and pungent character. An exciting ride it is, too – sample the squall at the heart of the slow movement or the finale's storm-tossed development – but always counterbalanced by a heartwarming poetic and lyrical impulse. The symphony's peroration positively glowers and sets the seal on a memorable display. The performance of its much-loved successor is scarcely less fine, combining as it does canny pacing with many a stimulating fleck of detail along the journey. True, you won't encounter the same life-enhancing levels of electric charge, combustible spontaneity and inspirational ardour reached by such legendary exponents as Beecham (BBC SO), Monteux (LSO) or Barbirolli (RPO), but Storgårds and his admirable orchestra have much to tell us and do so with composure, conviction and eloquence.

Of the Fourth Symphony Storgårds takes a less intimidatingly gaunt and daringly broad view than some (most notably Sir Colin Davis). His is an enviably cogent, keenly observant conception that put me in mind of Berglund's way with this masterpiece, boasting bass-lines that always stalk purposefully and an especially penetrating reading of the slow movement. Perhaps the finale's devastatingly trenchant peak might have benefited from a just a fraction greater bite, though I do applaud Storgårds's refusal to apply the brakes

in the coda – the strings' valedictory chords now all the more unnerving in their inscrutability. He gauges the first movement of the Fifth to perfection, its whirlwind of a conclusion possessing both thrilling cumulative impact and giddy excitement (the BBC Phil's formidable brass and timpani captured with laudable definition by the Chandos microphones). And how shrewd of the Finn to notice that all but a handful of the *ff* markings during the entire first appearance of the finale's swaying horn melody are allotted to those *spiccato* double-basses punctuating it. Not everyone will approve of the way he hustles through the final hammer-blows.

Storgårds steers a clear-sighted, commendably unaffected course through the lofty Sixth, and his personable reading overall has a responsiveness, ruddy complexion and rhythmic spring that count for a very great deal (marvellously 'dancing' timpani in the first half of the finale). All that's missing, perhaps, is the last ounce of rapture, luminosity and authority that mark out the greatest interpretations on disc – I'm thinking of Beecham, Davis (with the Boston SO and live in London), Blomstedt and Vänskä. The Seventh likewise brings lots to admire, not least an imposing sense of architecture, nobility of spirit and truly epic countenance. In fact, only the Third Symphony fails to coalesce convincingly, its three movements respectively lacking something in unflustered poise, dusky mystery and sublime inevitability – in which respects this newcomer lags some way behind the likes of Davis in Boston and London, Kamu, Blomstedt and Berglund in Helsinki. Still, there's plenty to enjoy elsewhere, and I wouldn't let that lone misfire deter newcomers and aficionados alike from investigating this impressive enterprise for themselves. **G**

Sym No 2 – selected comparisons:

LSO, Monteux (6/60*) (ELOQ) ELQ480 6568
BBC SO, Beecham (A/04) (BBCL) BBCL4154-2
RPO, Barbirolli (9/08) (TEST) SBT1418

Sym No 3 – selected comparisons:

Helsinki RSO, Kamu (10/73*) (DG) 474 353-2GTR3
Boston SO, C Davis (11/86*) (DECC) 478 3696DB5
SFSO, Blomstedt (3/93*) (DECC) B 475 7677PBX
Helsinki PO, Berglund (5/96*) (EMI) 476963-2
LSO, C Davis (6/04*) (LSO) LSO0552 or LSO0191

Sym No 6 – selected comparison:

RPO, Beecham (1/06) (SOMM) SOMM-BEECHAM18



THE RECORDING

Sibelius Complete Symphonies
BBC PO / John Storgårds
Chandos **Ⓢ** **Ⓜ** CHAN10809

Fourteenth Symphony at once attracted the attention of recording teams East and West. Not all those early classics from the likes of Barshai, Ormandy, Gosman, Kondrashin, Rostropovich, Haitink and Bernstein are readily available in physical format but the good news is that Vasily Petrenko's new disc, the penultimate instalment of his Naxos cycle, is up there with the best of them. I would not want to be without Rostropovich's maximally emotive 1973 version with Galina Vishnevskaya and Mark Reshetin (last sighted on Warner Classics) yet Petrenko's tighter, more direct manner has valid Soviet precedents of its own. The rhythmic precision of what sounds like a relatively small body of Liverpool strings is quite something and the high-voltage sense of forward movement is maintained throughout. The downside is that the snap and crackle of youthful enthusiasm occasionally seems to edge out deeper sentiments in the less physically demonstrative songs.

There is no coupling but with bold sound and detailed booklet-notes this would be a thrilling investment at any price. The texts are helpfully transliterated and we are not expected to rootle around for the translations online. Let's not forget the singers' fresh-sounding contribution. Alexander Vinogradov, oddly credited as a baritone, is one of those Russian basses whose rich, sepulchral tones, easily produced, belie a boyish frame. He can also be heard on Delphian's Rachmaninov song compendium (reviewed last month). Gal James was a late stand-in. Even if her voice might be thought a tad undersized, she throws herself into the proceedings with striking commitment. Strongly recommended. **David Gutman**

Selected comparison:

Vishnevskaya, Reshetin, Moscow Acad SO, Rostropovich
(12/75^o, 10/97^o) (WARN) ▶ 2564 64177-2

Spohr

Clarinet Concertos – No 1, Op 26;

No 2, Op 57; No 3; No 4

Maria du Toit cl

Cape Philharmonic Orchestra / Arjan Tien

Brilliant Classics © ② 94837 (99' • DDD)



Missing autographs raise problems. Three of these concertos survive only through manuscript copies printed or handwritten, No 4 the lucky exception. Unsatisfactory; but Keith Warsop explains the circumstances in 'The Publication History of Spohr's Clarinet Concertos', his recent

article for the composer's society. Arresting music, though, and tough on soloists because Spohr scorned restrictions. 'He wrote first and asked afterwards,' says Pamela Weston, but he would not have had to ask Maria du Toit, well in control of the notes if not always their guiding spirit.

Secure too is Arjan Tien, most sympathetic to her when she chimes with the introversion within the music, jointly in tune with the melancholia uppermost in the E minor tonality of No 4. Literal minds may object to the first movement's tempo, nine points lower than Spohr's specified crotchet=132; and also object to perhaps an exaggerated *poco meno mosso* at 6'09". But there is no gainsaying the grave beauty deeply felt in this movement, in the *Larghetto* and even in the long E major section of the finale.

Not as unswerving are the other performances, largely because du Toit isn't comfortable with bravura. She holds back; and passionate advocacy for, say, the coruscating outer movements of No 2 is only partially forthcoming. Tien ought to have empowered her to break free but misses out on fulfilling so crucial a part of his role. Instead he's dutiful or rhythmically heavy, as in the first movement of No 3, and the orchestra dutifully follows him. Robin O'Neill better supports Michael Collins in fine fettle – and in a fine Hyperion recording. But neither conductor matches Paul Meyer who, as his own conductor, creates cohesive yet mercurial frameworks for eruptive interpretations and is equally at home with the angelic or the demonic. Alpha's contrived orchestral sound, however, irritates with repetition. Brilliant Classics' production, flawed by changes in levels between movements, is nonetheless airier and clearer, instruments in better balance. Unflawed though is the angelic as expressed by du Toit in the other slow movements, evocatively phrased, tenderly yielding, the chalumeau register exquisitely ethereal. Introversion – again.

Nalen Anthoni

Cl Concs Nos 1–4 – selected comparisons:

Collins, Swedish CO, O'Neill (7/05, 7/08)

(HYPE) CDA67509 & CDA67561

Meyer, Lausanne CO (11/12) (ALPHA) ALPHA605

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring. Capriccio^a.

Symphony of Psalms^b

^aMichel Béroff pf^b English Bach Festival Chorus;

London Symphony Orchestra / Leonard Bernstein

Video director Humphrey Burton

ICA Classics ① DVD ICAD5124 (82' • NTSC • 4:3 •

Enhanced mono • 0)

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, April 8, 1972



Admirers of Leonard Bernstein have never had it so good, not least the many fans of his 'tumultuous' way with

The Rite of Spring. This involvement can be traced from a live New York Philharmonic relay of 1951 (West Hill Radio Archives) through to extended rehearsal footage with an orchestra of young musicians at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival of 1987 (Kultur). There are three officially approved audio recordings (from 1958, 1972 and 1982) and we already have ICA Classics to thank for the revivification of his earlier televised *Rite* with the LSO from Croydon's Fairfield Halls. That one is in mid-Sixties black-and-white but it is extraordinary how quickly ear and eye adjust when faced with music-making of such incendiary quality.

This latest is less sensational. It arrives in the context of a virtually complete presentation of the Stravinsky memorial concert given by Bernstein and the same band in the Royal Albert Hall on April 8, 1972. The footage is in colour. Unfortunately there is some hyperactive visual switching between instrumental sections early on. Close miking in the cavernous Kensington venue gives rise to too many perverse balances, the strings virtually inaudible in the shattering conclusion to Part 1. I found the grainier reprocessed mono of the 1966 BBC tape more consistently listenable than what is obtained here from ITV's *Aquarius* broadcast. Bernstein's conception has loosened up a little too, the slower tempo for the opening of Part 2 and the 'Ritual of the Ancestors' now apparently set in stone, although the scraping sound of the *güiro* (removed by Stravinsky in later editions) survives in the concluding shriek. The reading is more or less that immortalised in the contemporaneous 'wrap-round' quadrasonic studio sessions for CBS.

In the *Symphony of Psalms* the original ITV material was found to have deteriorated. Hence a few stills of the conductor and his score are pressed into service to plug continuity gaps. The interpretation is broad, more determinedly emotional than we expect in this music today. By the end it had me enthralled but again there exists a studio recording made at the same time with the same agenda, consciously designed for repeated listening. There is only a smattering of applause at the end as the maestro had requested a respectful silence. As Humphrey Burton

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a new quartet by Simon Rowland-Jones - to be given its world premiere by the Doric String Quartet during the Festival. We will also take a cruise in Valletta's wonderful natural harbour on board a "Luzzu" - a traditional Maltese boat.

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FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS

also explains in his note, the screen seen suspended above was used to project Bernstein's filmed evocation of Stravinsky's achievement. Only you won't find that here. There is however a real rarity: the 21-year-old Michel Béroff as soloist in a Stravinsky piece which I feel actually works best in the context of choreographer George Balanchine's masterly *Jewels*, especially on DVD.

David Gutman

Rite of Spring – selected comparison:

LSO, Bernstein (12/12) (ICA) ICAD5082

Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No 3, Op posth 75^a.

Symphony No 7 (compl Bogatryyev)

^aLilya Zilberstein *pf*

Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Dmitri Kitaenko

Oehms Ⓢ OC672 (57' • DDD)



Even those who can't get enough Tchaikovsky might not find a convincing

case for these two might-have-beens: the Symphony No 7 that he worked on in 1891-92, then abandoned and later began recycling into what's now called the Piano Concerto No 3. Still, musicians keep trying out the Semyon Bogatryyev completion of the symphony, one of the first being Eugene Ormandy with the Philadelphia Orchestra, whose 1962 recording at least has sonic glamour to recommend it (RCA, 9/62).

This new set is at least the fifth recording. The music sounds and behaves like Tchaikovsky but, aside from some lyrical moments in the *Andante*, fails to make you care. All of the Tchaikovskian gestures are there but without compelling content. It sounds like the composer on mood-stabilising medication. And that's not how we like him.

One can almost imagine the E flat Symphony was a dry run for the conceptually daring Symphony No 6, written the following year perhaps with a clearer idea of what the composer wanted to do. Though the piano concerto has survived in a greater state of fruition, perhaps Tchaikovsky would have eventually abandoned that project. The inspiration just isn't there.

Performances are just fine and the sound quality is sumptuous, making this disc a solid recommendation for those whose curiosity gets the best of them. Those who already have the pairing of this symphony and piano concerto conducted by Neeme Järvi won't find any new revelations here.

Lilya Zilberstein gives a well-considered performance but Järvi's Geoffrey Tozer generates more needed electricity.

David Patrick Stearns

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Tozer, LPO, N Järvi (4/93) (CHAN) CHAN9130

Vivaldi • Pärt

'The Vivaldi Album'

Vivaldi The Four Seasons. Concerto

for Three Violins, RV551 Pärt Passacaglia

Anne Akiko Meyers *vn*

English Chamber Orchestra / David Lockington

eOne Ⓢ EOMCD7790 (53' • DDD)

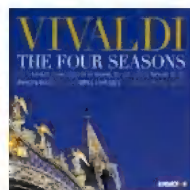
Vivaldi

The Four Seasons.

Violin Concertos – RV222; RBV237

Zsolt Kalló *vn* Capella Savaria

Hungaroton Ⓢ HCD32729 (59' • DDD)



Having recently reviewed Erik Bosgraaf's recorder version of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in these pages (Brilliant Classics, 4/14), two more are now on offer, one using modern forces, the other period instruments. William Yeoman surveyed nearly 50 recordings spanning 1947-2009 in the August 2011 issue of *Gramophone*, concluding that it wasn't so much which recording as how many to buy.

One of the things that makes a new recording interesting is the story behind it. For the American violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, the impetus for her latest recording seems to have been the desire to create a showcase for her recently acquired 1741 'Vieuxtemps' Guarneri del Gesù, considered one of the finest violins ever made and yet never before recorded. As well as *The Four Seasons*, she performs all three solo parts of Vivaldi's F major Triple Concerto, RV551, and a four-minute Pärt *Passacaglia* (2003), arranged by the composer for violin and orchestra.

Partnered by the English Chamber Orchestra (as was Nigel Kennedy), Meyers has produced a polished, mainstream performance that will appeal to non-specialists for the Romantic *portamentos* with which she inflects the slow movements (listen especially to that of 'Summer') and to string players for the exquisite beauty of the sound she draws from the 'Vieuxtemps'. While it is a novelty to hear the same person playing three parts at once (thanks to the eOne engineers), perversely I would prefer the Triple Concerto played by three

different people in order to enjoy their interaction. The Pärt is undoubtedly a collector's item, its exotic timbres compelling repeated listening to appreciate.

The Capella Savaria *Four Seasons*, coupled with two additional Vivaldi violin concertos, will attract a different listener. Founded in 1981, the Hungarian band have made more than 70 recordings. Not surprisingly, because the leader, Zsolt Kalló, is the soloist, an easy rapport between the players is palpable; the sound of his violin seamlessly emerges and merges with that of the orchestra. Because Capella Savaria specialise in Baroque repertoire, they know well how to balance the solo and *tutti*, the treble and bass elements – elements consistently skewed in favour of the soloist in the eOne recording. If the sound on the Hungaroton disc isn't as beautiful as on the former, it is at least more stylish and in the spirit Vivaldi intended. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'Basso bailando'

Falla Siete Canciones populares españolas

(arr van Prooijen)^a Piazzolla Cuatro

Estaciones Porteñas (arr van Prooijen)^b

Rota Divertimento concertanto^c

Rick Stotijn *db*^b Malin Broman *vn*^a Lavinia Meijer

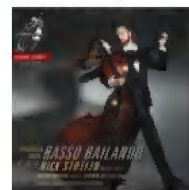
hp^{bc} Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra /

^bSimon Crawford Phillips; ^cMats Rondin

Charnel Classics Ⓢ CCSSA33613

(66' • DDD/DSD)

^{bc}Recorded live



'Basso bailando', or music for 'dancing bass', features the instrument in a

programme where the emphasis is on music with a lighter touch, enhanced in two instances by live performances where the audience no doubt added an extra frisson.

Piazzolla's *Cuatro Estaciones* ('Four Seasons') were originally scored for the composer's tango quintet in the 1960s. As arranged for double bass with violin and strings by Marijn van Prooijen, these four pieces retain their Argentinian flavour and lose little of their impact in these vital performances. Rick Stotijn relishes the quirky humour of the tango rhythms that alternate with melodies akin to popular song in the fast-slow-fast structure of each season. There's much to admire too in the Dutchman's soulful delivery of Piazzolla's music, capturing the moods from the romantic to the menacing.

Prooijen's arrangements of Falla's *Six Popular Spanish Songs* are more of a problem. All's well while the dance



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SCHUMANN: Kinderszenen & Waldszenen, **JANÁČEK:** On the overgrown path I
Marc-André Hamelin
Hyperion CDA68030

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GRAMOPHONE EDITOR'S CHOICE:

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Coro COR16120

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Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Leif Ove Andsnes
Sony 88883705482

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Harmonia Mundi HMC902162

Offer £13.99

PANUFNIK: Symphony Works Vol. 7 (Symphony No. 5 'Sfere' etc)
Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Lukasz Borowicz
CPO 7776862

Offer £13.49

PROKOFIEV: Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7; *Bournemouth SO* / Kirill Karabits
Onyx ONYX4137

Offer £13.49

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 14; *Royal Liverpool PO* / Vasily Petrenko
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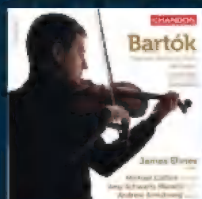
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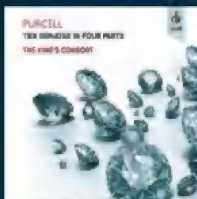
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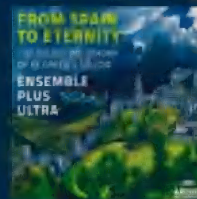
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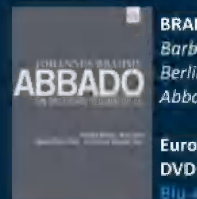
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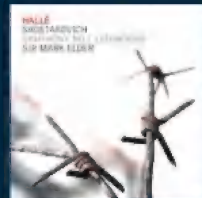
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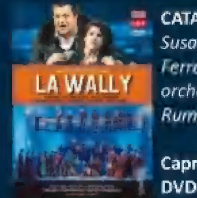
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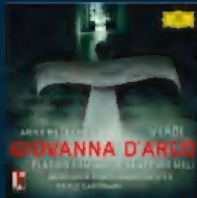
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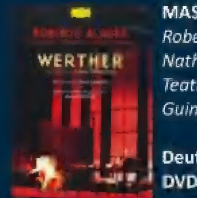
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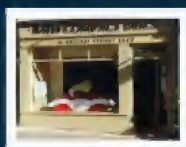
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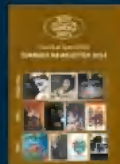


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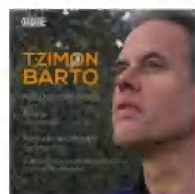
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rhythms of 'El paño moruno', 'Jota' and 'Polo' hold sway – the harp adding an extra bite to the music's flavour. However, for all Stotijn's poetic line, the transfer of the vocal line to the orchestra's lowest instrument doesn't convince in either 'Asturiana' or the lullaby, 'Nana', where the grumbling bass is no enhancement.

The *Divertimento concertante* by Nino Rota may be derivative in its language but it is enormous fun and a piece of considerable ingenuity. Classical in form and style, delectably scored, it's given an effervescent performance by the orchestra and Stotijn, who keeps our attention from his commanding first entry through to his 'cheeky chappie' characterisation of the finale's rondo theme. The Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra are as adept as their soloist in responding to the twists and turns in Rota's writing. **Adrian Edwards**

'Paganini Variations'

Brahms Variations on a Theme by Paganini, Op 35 **Liszt** Six Grandes Etudes de Paganini, S141 **Lutosławski** Variations on a Theme by Paganini **Rachmaninov** Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini, Op 43^a **Tzimon Barto** *pf*^a **Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach** Ondine Ⓟ ② ODE1230-2 (84' • DDD)



All six *Grandes Etudes de Paganini* are a comparative rarity on disc. Gary Graffman's

1959 traversal (Sony, 4/65) is brilliantly executed, lightly pedalled and closely recorded but Barto's is the best modern recording. Though not above discreetly adding the odd octave and arpeggiated chord, he is acutely observant of Liszt's directions while bringing his own distinctive voice to the music. Try, for instance, the opening pages of 'La campanella', played here much slower than normal, *pp* and with pedal producing a wonderful bell-like effect. I don't think his extreme *rallentando* in Var 10 of the famous A minor study quite works but that is a small quibble.

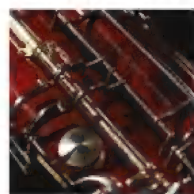
Liszt's final study leads into the two books of Brahms's variations on the same theme. These and the Lutosławski *Paganini* Variations (in which Barto plays both piano parts) amount to over 37 minutes of music almost exclusively in the key of A minor. It says something for Barto's touch and imaginative colouring that this never obtrudes. His is a distinguished account of the Brahms (the booklet helpfully grants a separate track to each variation) with a

notably languid Var 4 from Book 2 producing an unexpectedly touching effect.

The second disc has just one item, Rachmaninov's *Paganini* Rhapsody (as it's inaccurately referred to in the track listing), lasting 26'01". This is exactly four minutes slower than the composer, due in part to the 18th Variation – one of the slowest (3'47") yet most intense on disc. Throughout, you'll notice a wealth of orchestral detail under Eschenbach's direction in an empathetic partnership that brings an ethereal atmosphere to Var 11 and a truly scintillating verve and precision to the final six variations. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Symphonies of Wind Instruments'

Hindemith *Konzertmusik*, Op 41. Symphony in B flat **Schoenberg** Theme and Variations, Op 43a **Stravinsky** *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* **Wallin** *Changes* **Royal Norwegian Navy Band / Ingar Bergby** 2L Ⓟ ② (Ⓢ + Ⓜ) 2L102SABD (58' • DDD/DSD/DXD). Blu-ray: DTS-HD MA 192kHz/24 bit 5.1 & LPCM 192kHz/24-bit stereo



Stravinsky's famous memorial to Debussy may be the title-track here but the main

interest in this vividly played programme lies elsewhere. A few months on from the 50th anniversary of his death, Hindemith's star continues to wax and the unusual pairing of his two major wind-band scores is illuminating. The *Konzertmusik* (1926) is iconoclastic without being provocative, its content directing the formal structure, whereas the Symphony in B flat (1951) is the product of maturity, with form and content in perfect balance. Bergby's account of the latter rivals the composer's own from the mid-1950s but has far superior sound and is a match for Reynish. Recordings of the *Konzertmusik* have come and gone but 2L's is the best of them (much crisper than Roger Epple's for Wergo – nla).

Schoenberg's neo-tonal Theme and Variations (1943) separates the two Hindemith works and provides a fascinating contrast. It is rather unjustly overlooked and the Royal Norwegian Navy Band catch its mix of wistfulness and rigour with verve. After these, Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1920, rev 1947) makes for a radical change of pace but is upstaged by a Norwegian work: Rolf Wallin's pulsating early *Changes* (1984), based on the Chinese I Ching. The performances are splendidly executed (one

is tempted to say with military precision), greatly expressive and in stunning sound that renders the wind textures with such clarity that they never cloy or become tiresome. I suspect that, for sound quality at the very least, this disc may represent the finest recordings all of these works have enjoyed. Highly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Hindemith *Symphony* – selected comparisons:

Philb *Orch*, *Hindemith* (2/91) (EMI) 763373-2

RNCM *Wind Orch*, *Reynish* (6/00) (CHAN) CHAN9805

'Undercover Bach'

'Orchestral Suites and Concertos'

Concertos – BWV571; BWVAnh152.

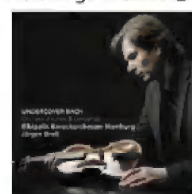
Ouvertures – BWV820; BWV822; BWV1067a.

Partita, BWV1006

Elbipolis Baroque Orchestra, Hamburg /

Jürgen Gross *vi*

Challenge Classics Ⓟ CC72625 (71' • DDD)



Borrowing, adapting, transcribing: Bach was a master at this game.

So why would he, who

borrowed from others and from himself, not wink approvingly at the work of Jörg Jacobi and Werner Breig? The opening work, BWV822, sets an example. Not by Bach it would seem, but thought to be conceived by Bach for harpsichord from an orchestral work by someone else. Backgrounds to every piece are explained in the booklet-note.

Intrepid arrangements and doubtless good intentions are subverted by a recording that crowds the performers into a confined area. Movements such as the Overture and Bourrée of BWV822 or the Bourrées of BWV1006 and BWV1067a emerge aggressive, while the introductions to the Overtures BWV820 and BWV1067a are of a metronomic stiffness, all probably accentuated by cramped space, congested sound and, worst of all, filtered harmonics. A prominent harpsichord can irritate too. But not in the first movement of BWV1006, originally the E major Partita for solo violin, its introductory Prelude arranged for organ by Bach (and for piano by Rachmaninov and Wilhelm Kempff) as the festive Sinfonia to Cantata No 29. Harpsichordist Veronika Brass is artistic in this movement, yet unyielding and monotonous in approach to the two Minuets, in a six-movement work now adeptly transcribed and transposed as the Partita in D for harpsichord and strings. Many another movement is considerably performed but the bugbear of a claustrophobic acoustic negates best efforts. **Nalen Anthoni**

Prokofiev's Seventh Symphony

Kirill Karabits tells *Philip Clark* why he started his Prokofiev cycle at the end

Kirill Karabits and I are attempting to march through Sergey Prokofiev's Symphony No 7 chronologically – each movement, each moment of each movement, in order – but the restless nature of Prokofiev's material keeps defying our best intentions. The opening movement's second theme reappears in the finale where you least expect it, and my suggestion that a blast of oompah brass in Prokofiev's toy-town second-movement *scherzo* could be a puppet military march brings us back to the finale once again.

'In the finale you hear the marching of Pioneers!' Karabits explains. 'I remember from my own schooldays in Ukraine, which is where Prokofiev grew up, there were different levels of achievement at school before you could join the Party. At first you were an Octoberist and wore a little star on your uniform. And then, when you became a Pioneer, you could wear a red bow tie. A proud moment! Each club had its own march and here Prokofiev, nearing the end of his life, is recalling something important from childhood. But he's not mocking or being sarcastic. This is an honest and innocent memory.'

And around such memories is Prokofiev's Seventh Symphony built. This elusive and inscrutable score might feel an improbable starting point for this new cycle of Prokofiev symphonies led by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's principal conductor. For anyone opting to play it safe, the

'The music starts ticking towards death like a stopwatch has been started...and yet tries to resist the inevitable' – Kirill Karabits

familiar *Classical* Symphony or ever-popular Fifth Symphony would be the symphonies of choice; but, paired with Prokofiev's mighty Third Symphony, Karabits makes the case that all Prokofievian life is paraded inside his last symphony, completed a year before he died in 1953. By the end of our conversation, I wonder why any conductor beginning a Prokofiev cycle would not start with his Seventh Symphony.

'You could call it a farewell symphony,' Karabits tells me. 'It's a symphony that looks back over his life and childhood – an old man's dream of childhood. But he's also saying farewell. Look at the ending – it's just a heartbeat that slows



Kirill Karabits: bringing Prokofiev's Ukrainian childhood to life in Bournemouth

down and then stops. Like Bartók's late-period Third Piano Concerto, at the end of his life Prokofiev is returning to very simple musical material. But this simplicity, of course, has a dual meaning. Shostakovich is a realist. He looks at the world and tells you what he thinks. He shows you the blood. But Prokofiev has his own world – a world of fairy-tales, of giants, of childlike fantasies – and that matters first, and only through that prism do we see the realities of the wider world.'

The composer's last few years were, Karabits explains, acutely painful. His health was failing, his personal relationships were strained and those repeated accusations of formalism from the regime stung. Opening the score, I ask how this back-story impacts interpretatively moment by moment, note-on-note. 'You must take distance,' he insists. 'You cannot play Prokofiev in the realistic way you approach Shostakovich. The second theme of the first movement, which Prokofiev brings back at the end of the symphony, is "sad" music written in a major key. But you can't conduct it telling people "this is sad music". It just has to be what it is. It can't be too [Karabits makes his right hand shake – the archetypal conductorly *espressivo* gesture], but nor can it be



The historical view

Igor B Maslowski
'Letter from France', *Gramophone*,
July 1954

'From the musical angle, it is a "light" symphony – it suggests Prokofiev parodying his own music – but it is very melodious, lyric and superbly orchestrated.'

Dmitry Kabalevsky
Diary entry, c1950

'All his energies were directed to the one aim, of saving for his work all the strength he had left. At times it seemed as if he knew his malady would defeat him in the end and he was deliberately hurrying to get all his ideas down on paper before it was too late.'

Gramophone, June 1955
Andrew Porter on Ormandy and Malko

'The first movement is not *allegro* but *moderato*, like that of Shostakovich's Tenth but much richer in its material. The broad second subject is magnificent...Ormandy gives the better-rehearsed and more convincingly executed performance.'

too dry. Yes, it's warm, but Prokofiev, I think, is observing his own thoughts and feelings – which are real enough, and yet he's apart from them.'

Prokofiev, Karabits thinks, is evoking the vast open rural heartland of Ukraine. This theme builds from the soil upwards and will eventually touch the stars – clearly the composer is rooting himself in the landscape of his forefathers. 'This second theme is especially touching after the symphony's first theme,' he says, 'which is very slightly sentimental but with a purity that allows you to build emotions around it yourself. Like many Prokofiev melodies, it has an endless feeling – a melody that could, in theory, carry on into infinity – which makes it difficult to phrase. Whenever you think it's coming to an end, the bass takes over and then the upper strings join again and it repeats. This endless melody has to keep moving, and yet needs an awareness of structure and architecture.'

The first theme ends in C sharp minor but a miraculous harmonic sleight of hand slithers a semitone higher to D major. The coda picks up on the major/minor ambiguity implicit in the second theme: the movement ends in C sharp major but underpinned by minor harmonies – 'you can't escape your destiny' is how Karabits explains the harmonic symbolism. Prokofiev's *scherzo* is an antidote to the disarmingly intricate harmonic machinations of the first movement. 'It's a waltz! And by the end of the *scherzo*, you've forgotten the first movement. Tchaikovsky often uses waltzes in peculiar situations – think of his late symphonies – and here Prokofiev is simply reminding us of happy music. Except, of course, you can't absolutely forget the context of the opening movement. The string theme which opens the third movement, marked *Andante espressivo*, reminds us of the first movement. Prokofiev is remembering his memories.'

The mention of Tchaikovsky prompts me to comment that the two men could hardly have had a more polarised approach to symphonic form. 'Tchaikovsky makes his themes fight,' Karabits agrees, 'but Prokofiev never does. When, in the finale, the second theme from the first movement reappears, Prokofiev puts it into a new context but there's no conflict.'

'The finale opens with a side of Prokofiev we haven't yet heard. After the flowing melodies of the other three movements, suddenly it's Haydn. This is the Prokofiev of the *Classical* Symphony again. There are *staccatos* and non-*staccatos*; there are sudden grace notes and triplet semiquavers, details of articulation that need to be realised with great precision.' The playful, fantasy-like tone of the symphony has often led it to be described as a symphony for children. But the final few pages are obviously, Karabits feels, the work of a man about to meet his maker: 'The music starts ticking towards death like a stopwatch has been started, and yet that theme from the first movement keeps returning, as though trying to resist the inevitable. It's genuinely a shock when the music simply stops,' Karabits continues: 'Later Prokofiev added a revised "joke" ending where his ghost returns, like in *Petrushka*. I include it as an alternative ending on the recording. But that original ending never fails to leave audiences stunned.'

As we wrap up, we talk about Prokofiev plundering a score he'd written for *Eugene Onegin* for this symphony and I wonder if Karabits knows more about the specifics. He shrugs. 'Look, he was a proud man and liked to show off. If Prokofiev liked something he'd written he'd use it in an opera, a symphony, a suite for jazz band – he'd use it everywhere!' **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Karabits's Prokofiev, turn to page 37

RACHMANINOV

SONGS

'electrifying'

DELPHIAN

Rachmaninov: Songs (3 CDs)

Evelina Dobraceva, Ekaterina Siurina, Justina Gringyte, Daniil Shtoda, Andrei Bondarenko, Rodion Pogossow, Alexander Vinogradov, Iain Burnside

The first complete recording for twenty years of Rachmaninov's published song output (with the addition of two delightfully comic occasional pieces), this already fantastically-acclaimed set lays two further claims to importance: our seven singers – hand-picked by renowned pianist Iain Burnside – are all native Russian speakers, and every song is performed in the key in which Rachmaninov wrote it, respecting both the specificity of vocal colour and the carefully designed tonal and expressive trajectory within each opus.

For the first twenty-five years of his career Rachmaninov regularly expressed himself in song, from Tchaikovskian beginnings to the extraordinarily personal range of vocal and pianistic utterance in his final two collections. Almost a century after exile brought down the curtain on this period of his creative output, Burnside and his singers bring these works to shimmering, gushing, crackling, magnificent life.



'sung gloriously with palpable heart and soul'

— Gramophone, EDITOR'S CHOICE



'Burnside's seven young singers are phenomenal'

— BBC Music Magazine, FIVE STARS/CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

'Burnside play[s] throughout with unfailing intensity and sensitivity: voice and piano are truly equal partners here, and the results are electrifying'

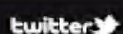
— Daily Telegraph, FIVE STARS



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Chamber



Jeremy Dibble on a disc of music from Elgar's 'years in the asylum': *'The Innovation Chamber Ensemble genuinely capture the spirit of this popular Victorian dance music'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 51**



Pwyll ap Siôn on Glass's 1968 downtown New York concert: *'The first full-length all-Glass programme, it signalled both a beginning and an end for the composer'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 53**

Beethoven

Violin Sonatas - No 1, Op 12 No 1;
No 2, Op 12 No 2; No 3, Op 12 No 3;
No 4, Op 23; No 5, 'Spring', Op 24

Elizabeth Wallfisch *vi* David Breitman *fp*
Nimbus Alliance Ⓟ ② NI6245/6 (104' • DDD)



Strangely miked, oddly presented. David Breitman is placed due right, Paul McNulty's

copy of an Anton Walter fortepiano stuck in the corner. Elizabeth Wallfisch, extreme left, appears to play in a different acoustic, her violin a Guarnerius del Gesù replica from Ekkard Seidl, often edgy and penetratingly harsh. The balance is weighted towards her in a poor recording, range of musicianship narrow from the beginning, the first movement of Op 12 No 1 an unrelenting *Allegro con brio* followed by a wooden, matter-of-fact slow movement. Less didactic is Op 23, though Andreas Staier and Daniel Sepec, also using period instruments, are finer in comparison, outer movements propulsive in flow as required, the second – unusually marked *Andante scherzoso più allegretto* – lilting humorously. These artists offer degrees of interpretative insight not within reach of Breitman and Wallfisch, whose inflexibility in performance keeps the music rhythmically inert. Phrases evened out, bar-lines intruding, and notes from the keyboard, equally weighted, aren't conducive to the highest forms of expression. Notation is literally converted to sound.

Need more? Go to the second movement of Op 24 and find it bogged down by Breitman's prosaic gait that even Wallfisch cannot alleviate. Switch to Martha Argerich/Gidon Kremer or Alexander Melnikov/Isabelle Faust to know the meaning of *Adagio molto espressivo*, to hear that the predominant dynamics are *piano* and *pianissimo*, and to feel the emotions their artistry can conjure. The highest forms of expression are yours for the listening. **Nalen Anthoni**

Vn Sons – selected comparisons:

Kremer, Argerich (1/96) (DG) 447 058-2GH3,
474 648-2GB8 or 477 9524GB13

Faust, Melnikov (10/10) (HARM) HMC90 2025/7

Op 23 – selected comparison:

Sepec, Staier (10/06) (HARM) HMC90 1919

Beethoven

'The Complete Piano Trios, Vol 3'

Trios - Op 11^o; Op 38^o. Variations on

'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu', Op 121a

Gould Piano Trio with ^oRobert Plane *cl*

Somm Céleste Ⓟ SOMMCD0135 (78' • DDD)

Recorded live at St George's, Bristol,
February 29, 2012



Not always profound Beethoven, but genuine Beethoven all the same. With a connection too: the theme from the second movement of his Piano Sonata Op 49 No 2 is reused in the Minuet of Op 38 and, as a slowed-down extract, in the *Adagio* of Op 11, where you may miss the fuller sounds of the Oslo Philharmonic Chamber Group or Gaudier Ensemble. But the slender tones of Robert Plane, Benjamin Frith and Alice Neary are no less communicative of this internalised interlude. Fleeting raw edges to Plane's tone also enhance the outer movements, in particular the second B flat minor variation in the finale.

If you are fond of the Septet, Op 20, for string quartet, clarinet, bassoon and horn (a favourite of Arturo Toscanini, too, who conducted it with a larger body of strings), this arrangement as a clarinet trio, albeit by Beethoven himself, may not please. But give it a chance, because these musicians repeat the artistry displayed in Op 11, the piano by no means an unidiomatic intrusion. And certainly idiomatically integrated in the trio for its rightful role in the *Kakadu* Variations – to a comic tune topped with a mock-serious introduction from which the Gould Trio seem to take their cue. Humour doesn't figure as

prominently as it does with Eugene Istomin, Isaac Stern and Leonard Rose, who specifically 'send up' Var 6 – violin and cello squawking at each other across the piano – in a way not heard here.

Nalen Anthoni

Op 11 – selected comparisons:

Oslo Philb Chbr Group (A/13) (LAWO) LWC1034

Gaudier Ens (HYPE) CDA67526

Op 121a – selected comparison:

Istomin, Stern, Rose (SONY) SB4K89979

Berteau

'Sonatas & Aires for Violoncello'

Sonates de camera, Op 1 - No 1; No 3; No 4;

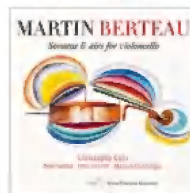
No 5; No 8; Trio (Sonata No 6). Five Aires.

Sixième Exercice

Christophe Coin, Felix Knecht, Petr Skalka *vcs*

Markus Hünninger *hps*

Glossa Ⓟ GCD922512 (64' • DDD)



Martin Berteau (1708-71) gave up the great French tradition of bass viol-playing in

favour of the cello after hearing the Italian cellist Franciscello, and thereafter founded a French tradition of cello-playing; he supposedly pioneered extended techniques and reputedly even taught the Dauphin. There are amusing anecdotes about his fondness for wine and attitude to money but precious little music has survived. Christophe Coin plays a variety of sonatas and airs; six sonatas are taken from Berteau's *Sonate de camera*, Op 1 (Paris, 1748), and five brief airs are taken from *Recueil d'airs choisis des meilleurs auteurs ajustés pour le violoncelle*, an anthology published by Berteau's pupil François Cupis.

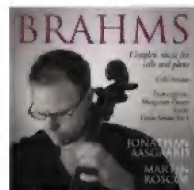
Coin's intimately conversational playing seems to convey perceptive subtleties effortlessly (eg the tender *Amoroso* of Sonata No 5 in E flat), and the delicate use of harmonics and double-stopping in the rondo finale of Sonata No 3 in G is extraordinary. Coin also plays with a staggering range and dexterity of bowing in the *Vivace* of Sonata No 1 in D, and plays

the seemingly didactic *Exercice* (étude) in G published by Berteau's pupil Jean-Louis Duport with consummate artistry. He continues the modern-day pedagogical tradition by having two of his former pupils at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis share duties on the basso continuo cello part. Harpsichordist Markus Hünninger provides refined support but leaves the spotlight to all three cellists for the beguiling three-part texture in the Sonata No 6 in E minor. This is a veritable masterclass. **David Vickers**

Brahms

'Complete Works for Cello and Piano'
Cello Sonatas - No 1, Op 38; No 2, Op 99.
Scherzo, 'F-A-E', WoO2 (arr Forbes).
Violin Sonata No 1, Op 78. Five Hungarian
Dances (arr Pjatti). Liebestreu, Op 3 No 1.
Wiegenlied, Op 49 No 4. Minnelied, Op 71 No 5.
Feldeinsamkeit, Op 86 No 2. Sapphische Ode,
Op 94 No 4. Wie Melodien zieht es mir, Op 105
No 1. Piano Concerto No 2, Op 83 - Andante
(arr Garben)

Jonathan Aasgaard vc **Martin Roscoe** pf
Avie ② AV2300 (130' • DDD)



There are a few contemporary arrangements on these discs which render the title 'Complete Works for Cello and Piano' possibly a tiny bit of a cheat, but this wonderful disc is far the richer for it. This is especially the case with the *Andante* from the Second Piano Concerto, arranged by the pianist and conductor Cord Garben, which allows you to hear more than anywhere else on the disc the lyricism in the playing of Jonathan Aasgaard (principal cellist of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and a noted soloist in his own right) and Martin Roscoe. It also brings out the side of Brahms the Lieder-writer, summing up just how much of Brahms's musical identity is crystallised in his cello music. There was a delicacy to Brahms's music that was borne out of a traditionality that Brahms didn't necessarily like in himself but which has always been firmly rooted in melody and harmony.

It's hardly surprising, then, that his relationship with the cello was such a mutually satisfying and productive one. The first of the two discs in this set deals with the sonatas – the first proper 'duo' sonatas Brahms wrote, with the intention of absolute parity between the parts – and in them you can hear the depth with which both players understand the intimacy between the two instruments. There is not

a sentence started by Aasgaard that Roscoe leaves unfinished; no question unanswered.

The sonatas of Brahms, of any genre or period, are nothing if the piano part is not as well played as the melody line. More than usual, therefore, it is important not to understate the value that Martin Roscoe adds to this recording with his utterly faultless playing. He makes you properly listen – the confidence you have in your own ability to understand the music is set up by him at the start, and stays by your side until the end. This is particularly noticeable in the fugal sections of the final movement of the First Sonata: as a whole the sonata is heaving with Bachian reference, and both Roscoe and Aasgaard understand that heritage, minutely crafting their performance to the point where it really is hard to think of a better one.

Caroline Gill

Brahms • Reinecke • Schumann

Brahms Horn Trio, Op 40^b **Reinecke** Trio, Op 274^b **Schumann** Adagio and Allegro, Op 70
Jasper de Waal hn **Frank van de Laar** pf with
^b**Hans Colbers** cl^a **Candida Thompson** vn
Channel Classics ② CCSSA34014
(65' • DDD/DSD)



There are (in my view) two contributions to the horn repertoire that stand out above all others: Mozart's four captivating concertos and Brahms's Horn Trio. Surprisingly, they are not technically difficult to play, but they are enormously rewarding for the horn player. The superb cornist Jasper de Waal and his colleagues give a truly inspired account of the Brahms. Schumann's Adagio and Allegro, which effectively uses the full range of the instrument, demands greater virtuosity, as does Carl Reinecke's Trio, which is freshly melodic and juxtaposes the two wind instruments beguilingly, achieving a most agreeable partnership with the piano. Worth hearing in this first-class performance, especially the *Scherzo* and finale, even if it is no match for the Brahms Trio.

So I shall concentrate my remarks on that glorious work, one of his very greatest chamber works and full of memorable tunes. Moreover, they are exactly right for their instrument, which Brahms wanted to be a traditional natural (un-valved) horn. Indeed, there is one point in the *Adagio mesto* where he expressly asked for the 'stopped' effect, where the horn achieves an 'in tune' note

by the player putting his hand in the instrument's bell. But here Jasper de Waal uses a double horn quite admirably.

Brahms composed his Trio almost immediately after his mother's death and the moving *Adagio* reflects that. Yet the character of the work is basically buoyant and warm-hearted. In the Trio of the infectious *Scherzo*, Brahms interpolated an *Albumblatt* for piano, written much earlier, and the finale is spirited in the way of a Mozartian rondo, yet remains essentially Brahmsian.

It brings the house down at any live performance, as does the account on this CD, with Candida Thompson and Frank van de Laar rising to the occasion. The recording is perfectly balanced and real. **Ivan March**

Carter

'103rd Birthday Concert'
Duetto. Figment IV. Mnemosyné. String Trio.
Rigmarole. Bariolage. Trije glasbeniki. Double
Trio. Retracing. Figment V. Hiyoku. A Sunbeam's
Architecture. Plus 'On Carter: Tributes to
Elliott Carter'
Nicholas Phan ten **Marie Tachouet** fl/picc **Stephen
Taylor** ob **Charles Neldich**, **Ayako Oshima** ds **Virgil
Blackwell** bd **Peter Kolkay** bn/cbn **Peter Evans** tpt
Jim Pugh tbn **Rolf Schulte** vn **Richard O'Neill** va
Fred Sherry vc **Bridget Kibbey** hp **Mike Truesdell**
perc **Stephen Gosling** pf **Ryan Adams** cond
NMC ② DVD NMCDVD193
(83' • NTSC • 16:9 • Stereo • 0 • T)
Recorded live at the 92nd Street Y, New York,
December 8, 2011



Eight decades after he completed his first acknowledged composition – a song he called 'My love is in a light attire' – this concert honouring Elliott Carter's 103rd birthday in December 2011 included four world premiere performances of recent work: *Mnemosyné* for solo violin, *Rigmarole* for bass clarinet and cello, *A Sunbeam's Architecture* for tenor and ensemble and a String Trio, and two American premieres – *Trije glasbeniki* for flute, bass clarinet and harp, and *Double Trio* for ensemble.

Double Trio (2011) is a quintessential Carter title and a quintessential piece follows. His field of play is defined by instrumental sonority but there's a neat conceptual twist. When played with mutes, trumpet and trombone can be made sonically fragile and vulnerable, especially heard against the context of scraped string double-stops and slammed *pizzicatos*. Which is a not uninteresting starting point for a

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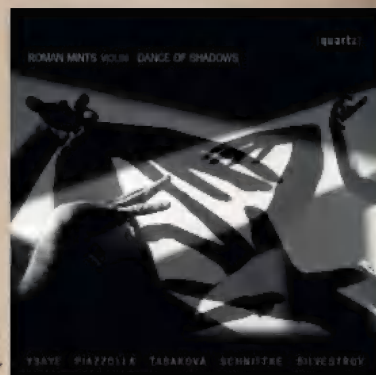
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BBC Music Magazine
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SONATA OP.27 NO.2
Piazzolla
TANGO - ETUDE NO.2
Dobrinka Tabakova
SPINNING A YARN
Schnittke
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piece, except that Carter doesn't allow this idea oxygen and instead defaults to the terms set by romanticism: expressionistic lines, collisions of different materials, harmonies bunching up towards points of climax.

Who could blame him for that? Carter based his success on precisely this cannily controlled counterpoint between streamlined modernism and retro expressionism. For a while, when Carter was figuring out how these tendencies might coexist, pieces like the Second Quartet and Concerto for Orchestra felt interestingly probing. But I'm not convinced that stringing a sequence of late Carter miniatures together does the music many favours. At this point Carter could, you feel, write with such ease of execution that the piece was a done deal before the first note had been written. The gestural pool for the first three string pieces – *Duetto*, *Figment IV* and *Mnemosyné* – feels oddly interchangeable. You miss the wit and elegant design of Donatoni and Babbitt, two composers with parallel aesthetic starting points.

That's my head speaking, but my heart can see why New York's new music elite, realising perhaps that he wasn't going to be around for his 104th, would want to celebrate Carter's birthday. The performances by a cast of Carter devotees are flawless; and if you yourself are a Carter devotee, do write in and tell me what I'm missing.

Phillip Clark

Elgar

'Music for Powick Asylum'

Menuetto. Andante and Allegro. Die junge Kokette. Maud. L'assomoir. Nelly. La brunette. La blonde. The Valentine. Duett. Paris. Helcia. A Singing Quadrille. Fugue. Blumine

Innovation Chamber Ensemble / Barry Collett
Somm © SOMMCD252 (77' • DDD)



For all Elgar *Liebbaber*, those crucial years of his autodidactic apprenticeship in

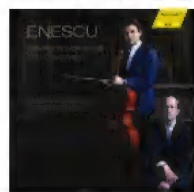
Worcester seem endlessly intriguing, particularly in how he bridged the gap between writing functional music in the popular dance styles of the time in the 1870s and the emergence of his distinctive 'serious' voice at the end of the 1880s. Throughout the miniatures of this CD we acquire fascinating glimpses of Elgar's cosmopolitan outlook. The *Paris* quadrilles, with their evocative French titles, embody memories of his 1880 trip to the French capital. Others have a Sullivanesque

ambience, redolent of the English theatre filtered through Italian opera.

Yet, increasingly, extended sonorous tunes in the trio sections quizzically disclose something of the Elgar yet to come, as do the presence of characteristic countermelodies; and there are recognisable, borrowed strands of melody which clearly remained in the later composer's mind. The first recording of the *Menuetto*, for example, contains the trio of the later Minuet, Op 21, which was composed in 1897 (and first heard in 1899), while the fifth quadrille of the set *L'assomoir* was reworked as the 'The Wild Bears' in the *Wand of Youth* Suite No 2 (which we know drew on much earlier material). The felicity of the polka *Helcia* looks forward to the delicious Delibian scoring of movements from the *Enigma* Variations, while the familiar progressions from the opening of 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' from *Sea Pictures* emerge with a surprise at the coda, 16 years before their appearance at Norwich in October 1899. Especially welcome, too, are the Andante and Allegro for oboe and string trio (another premiere recording), which are beautifully played by the Innovation Chamber Ensemble, who genuinely capture the spirit of this popular Victorian dance music. **Jeremy Dibble**

Enescu

Two Cello Sonatas, Op 26. Allegro (Sonata Movement). Nocturne et Saltarello
Valentin Radutiu *vc* Per Rundberg *pf*
Hänssler Classic (M) © CD98 021 (88' • DDD)



Rarely can two works that share the one opus number have

hailed from such different musical worlds, in the case of Enescu's two cello sonatas the comfort zone of full-bodied Romanticism and the zestful open-air environment of improvisatory-sounding folk music. There's also a disc premiere here in the form of an undated (early) 229-bar fragment of a sonata movement in F minor marked *allegro* that has been completed by Hans Peter Türk. Assertive in its opening measures before turning lyrically persuasive, even passionate, Enescu sets to work on a quasi-fugal idea (5'10") that works itself into a veritable swell of lava. Schumannesque one moment, redolent of Fauré or perhaps Saint-Saëns the next, Enescu's sonata-torso is well worth the occasional hearing. After an initial listen I had to check that the opening of the First Sonata (1898) wasn't an unwitting repeat of

the unpublished Allegro – those initial moments are so similar. Could the fragment have been a first shot at the Sonata's first movement? The playful *Allegro scherzando* is crisply dispatched by Valentin Radutiu and Per Rundberg, the *Molto andante*, where Schumann is again a sure-fire influence, played with considerable warmth of tone.

Turn to the opening of the Second Sonata (1935), completed after a gap of almost 40 years, and we revisit the world of the celebrated Third Violin Sonata (1926), the opening minutes ruminative in the manner of folk music, the development thereafter growing more exotic by the minute, related in spirit if not in overall design to Bartók. How different too the Second Sonata's agitated *scherzo* – angry, halting music spiced with double-stops, anxious *pizzicatos* and a challenging piano part. Next comes what is perhaps the most striking and certainly the most inspired music on the disc, the unaccompanied opening of Op 26 No 2's slow movement, music that vies with Kodály's Op 8 Solo Cello Sonata for eloquent purity, the latter half being particularly beautiful. Echoes of folk music dominate much of the finale, again recalling the world of the Third Violin Sonata. The second disc closes, as the first began, with youthful essays reflecting the mid-Romantics who Enescu loved (and played) so well, especially Brahms and Schumann, a Nocturne and Saltarello, very well performed.

As to comparisons, cellist Laura Buruiana and pianist Martin Tchiba (Naxos) level nearest to Radutiu and Rundberg, similar in approach, though I find Radutiu the subtler of the two cellists. If the sonatas are your prime requirements, Naxos fit both on a single CD. Granted that Hänssler, which uses two CDs (totalling only 88 minutes), adds the early fill-ups which, although interesting to hear once, maybe twice, could hardly be considered crucial additions to your collection, unless you're an Enescu completist. **Rob Cowan**

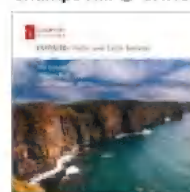
Vc Sons – selected comparison:

Buruiana, Tchiba (A12) (NAXO) 8 570582

Esposito

Violin Sonatas^a – Op 32; Op 46; Op 67.
Cello Sonata, Op 43^b

^aMia Cooper *vn* ^bWilliam Butt *vc* Lance Coburn *pf*
Champs Hill © CHRCDO66 (80' • DDD)



Champs Hill Records' exploration of chamber music byways continues apace,



A personality of his own: championing the chamber works of Philippe Gaubert, Henri Demarquette and Marie-Josèphe Jude

alighting here on four uncomplicated and rather pretty sonatas by Michele Esposito (1855–1929), an Italian from Castellammare di Stabia who spent the bulk of his professional life in Ireland, until retiring to Florence a year before his death. By no means a major composer, he was a major presence in Irish musical life at the time.

The four sonatas given here follow, in the main, conventional formats, either in four movements (the Third for violin) or three (the remainder). As Malcolm Macdonald's informative booklet essay notes, Esposito was not an innovative composer and these works – composed between the 1880s (no date is given for the G major, Op 32) and 1921 – break no new formal ground, although the finale of the 1899 Cello Sonata is unusual in being in a truncated sonata form. All four are a model of Classical poise, reflecting little of the musical developments of the later 19th century, though his style betrays the influence of Schumann, early Brahms and Fauré.

Mia Cooper and Lance Coburn prove eloquent advocates for the three violin sonatas, the first two of which deserve the attention of violinists generally (No 3 impressed me less, striking me as going through the motions, with some

sentimentality, rather than expressing anything new). William Butt has, perhaps, the best of the four, where Esposito achieves a balance between charm and profundity very nicely indeed. Michael Ponder's sound is beautifully balanced, too, as warm and intimate as the music itself.

Guy Rickards

Feldman

For Philip Guston

John Tilbury *pf* Carla Rees *fl* Simon Allen *perc*

Atopos ㉔ 4 ATP022 (4h 50' • DDD)

Recorded live at St Paul's Hall, Huddersfield, 2012



you don't know the half of it until you try to review his music on record. The scale of his structures is such that those usual failsafe modes of 'classical' music reviewing – relative tempi and equivalent moments between performances compared and contrasted – suddenly don't count for much. Because not only is Feldman's music long, it's repetitive. But not like Terry Riley, La Monte Young or Philip Glass.

Feldman's 'repetitions' in fact might not be literal repetitions at all, and moment-to-moment comparisons become meaningless, impossible even, because definable 'moments' as such don't really exist – instead, various melodic modules subtly rotate on their various axes but never reveal all of themselves at any one time, making the music hallucinate on its own being.

So let's open with a basic statement of fact: this latest recording of Feldman's 1984 *For Philip Guston*, featuring Carla Rees (flute), John Tilbury (piano) and Simon Allen (percussion), is very fine. Enough to persuade me to put my other versions – the California EAR Unit on Bridge; Julia Breuer (flute), Matthias Engler (percussion), Elmar Schrammel (piano) on Wergo – up on eBay? Not really, because Feldman's music, as Tilbury suggests in his booklet-note, despite being painstakingly notated, occupies speculative terrain more commonly associated with free improvisation: open-ended structures working themselves out over time. 'It's about being, and doing,' Tilbury writes. And you can't know an improviser from one record – you need a bunch of their records to gauge how patterns change and evolve.

Recorded at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in 2012

under less than ideal circumstances – Carla Rees had a heavy cold and sucked on cough sweets during a scheduled break – recording engineer Sebastian Lexer has discreetly soft-pedalled any coughing and eliminated the join. And this is very obviously a live recording. The boomy, echoing acoustic of St Paul's Hall in Huddersfield adds to the weighty ritual and is faithfully retained. And if you're interested in the usual comparative recording schtick – this recording has a noticeably slower pace than the California EAR Unit but broadly falls into alignment with the Wergo set. But more pertinent is the intensity of sound-making, softer-than-you-thought-ever-possible piano riding caliginous flute meeting only-just-there mallet percussion.

Philip Clark

Selected comparisons:

Breuer, Schrammel, Engler (9/08) (WERG) WER6701-2
California EAR Unit (BRID) BRIDGE9078

Gaubert

Violin Sonata^a. Trois Pièces^b. Quatre Esquisses^a. Lamento^b. Trois Aquarelles^c

^{a,c} Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian *vn*

^b Henri Demarquette *vc* Marie-Josèphe Jude *pf*
Timpani © 1C1203 (65' • DDD)



The booklet-note by no means downplays the promise of this disc. 'One will discover

with stupefaction an authentic masterpiece,' it says of Philippe Gaubert's Violin Sonata, a work composed in 1915, published five years later but here apparently recorded for the first time.

Stupefaction might be putting it a little strongly but the sonata is certainly revelatory of a creative talent worthy of attention. Some of the Gaubert works in this programme – the *Trois Aquarelles* for piano trio together with the *Trois Pièces* and the *Lamento* for cello and piano – featured on a Fuga Libera release in 2010 from the Trio Wiek, and identified a composer with a nice line in nostalgia and with a fluency and refinement redolent of Fauré. On that disc the *Trois Aquarelles* were played in Gaubert's arrangement for flute, cello and piano – Gaubert (1879-1941) was himself a flautist, a pupil of the influential Paul Taffanel – but Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian, Henri Demarquette and Marie-Josèphe Jude here play the original version with violin instead of flute, capturing the music's essential Gallic grace, its translucency and its romantic

impulse, qualities that also imbue the *Quatre Esquisses* for violin and piano.

The sonata, however, is made of more muscular stuff. From the emphatic gestures at the start, it would seem that Gaubert knew his Brahms and was not unaware of Franck in terms of harmony, but the music develops a personality of its own. This fine performance offers no reasons why it should so long have endured neglect. **Geoffrey Norris**

Trois Aquarelles, Trois Pièces, Lamento –

selected comparison:

Trio Wiek (FUGA) FUG556

Glass

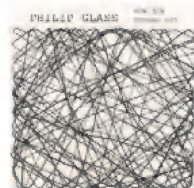
'How Now Strung Out'

How Now^a. Strung Out^b

^b Dorothy Pixley-Rothschild *vn* Philip Glass *org*

Orange Mountain Music © OMM0093 (50' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Filmmaker's Cinematheque,
New York, May 19, 1968



The concert held at the Filmmaker's Cinematheque, New York, on May 19,

1968, has acquired mythical status among minimalists. Comprising a full-length, all-Glass programme for the first time, it signalled both a beginning and an end for the composer – an end to pieces for solo or duet and the beginning of a new phase of works for amplified wind and keyboard ensemble.

One senses from listening to this recording why Glass felt the need for change. The two pieces contained here suggest a minimalist style in transition. The 30-minute *How Now*, for solo electric keyboard, recalls some of the features of Glass's nascent ensemble style – bright, buzzing textures, loud amplification and busy, pentatonic patterns. But the opening sounds like an unsuccessful attempt to imitate Reich's phasing technique (then very much in vogue), and the repetition of block-like units disrupts rather than animates the musical flow. The better-known *Strung Out* for amplified solo violin, played with admirable resolve by Dorothy Pixley-Rothschild, points with more purpose to future preoccupations with Glass's trademark additive patterns. Its near-endless cascade of quaver notes is nothing if not continuous but the violin does sound in need of support.

That Glass synthesised the sound of *How Now* with the structure of *Strung Out* in pieces such as *Music in Fifths* and *Music in Similar Motion* makes this recording of more than archival importance. It also testifies to the fact that Reich's and

Glass's early music found a far more receptive and eager audience in the downtown experimental film and art scene than in the uptown music milieu. The sound quality is also pretty good, despite a quite pronounced dip in level halfway through *How Now*.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Haydn

String Quartets – Op 50 No 1;

Op 76 No 1; Op 77 No 1

Modigliani Quartet

Mirare © MIR231 (64' • DDD)



As recently as the March issue I was pondering the thought processes

involved in choosing a 60-plus-minute recital of Haydn's string quartets, given the astonishing standard and variety he achieved throughout over half a century of pioneering work in the genre. On that occasion, the Matangi Quartet took the thematic route, grouping three quartets under the title 'Haydn's Nature'. On this disc the Modigliani Quartet select the first work as numbered from three of the later sets of quartets – Opp 50 (published in 1787), 76 (1799) and 77 (1802) – which seems as good a criterion as any.

The recording is less spacious than is often the case (compare, for example, the Takács Quartet in their benchmark set of Op 76), the wooden surfaces of what looks like a medium-size concert hall at La Grange au Lac, Evian-les-Bains, offering a somewhat drier resonance from these beautiful-sounding 17th- and 18th-century instruments. This only occasionally becomes bothersome: say, at the unison opening of the slow movement of Op 77 No 1 or the cruel unaccompanied passages that lead off Op 76 No 1. Nevertheless, the Modiglianis inject a lovely lilt to the all-too-brief Minuet of Op 76 No 1 and, in Op 77 No 1, to the Minuet and the lopsided figures of the finale – played with gratifying sweetness. A tendency to let intensity flag in slow movements leads one to suspect perhaps a lack of affection for the music; if as a result it seems that these players are happier at faster tempi, there are only isolated moments – in the finale of Op 50 No 1, for example – when the music seems not to lie entirely happily under the fingers. **David Thresher**

Op 76 No 1 – selected comparison:

Takács Qt (9/88, 1/90) (DECC) 475 6213DF2

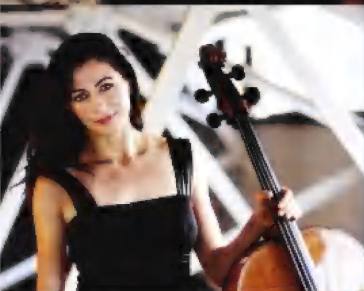
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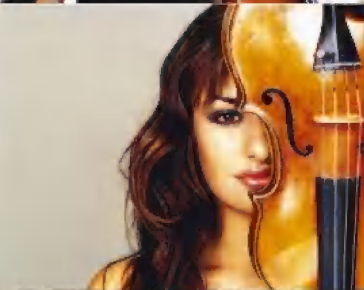
Monday 13 October 2014, 7.30pm

Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra with Peter Donohoe



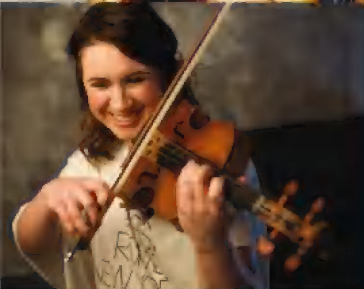
Saturday 15 November 2014, 7.30pm

Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra



Wednesday 26 November 2014, 7.30pm

Brussels Philharmonic with Milos Karadaglic



Monday 9 February 2015, 7.30pm

St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra with Natalie Clein

Tuesday 24 February 2015, 7.30pm

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra



Wednesday 11 March 2015, 7.30pm

Camerata Salzburg with Nicola Benedetti

Tuesday 31 March 2015, 7.30pm

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Freddy Kempf
(Beethoven Series)

Wednesday 8 & Friday 10 April 2015, 7.30pm

Berne Symphony Orchestra
with Oliver Schneider and Chloe Hanslip

Wednesday 20 May 2015, 7.30pm

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra & Chorus
(Beethoven Symphony No. 9)

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Harvard calling: Vijay Iyer (left), the university's new Rosenblatt professor, contributes to his *Mutations I-X* for piano, string quartet and electronics

Haydn

Die sieben letzten Worte unseres
Erlösers am Kreuze, HobXX/2

Casals Quartet

Harmonia Mundi (HMC90 2162 (60' • DDD)



The solemnities of Good Friday, enshrined with such intensity and contemplative sincerity by Haydn in his *Seven Last Words*, are likewise the guiding principles for the Cuarteto Casals in this deeply affecting performance. One great strength of it is that the ensemble do not in any way seek to over-emphasise the spirituality of this music or, even less desirably, to invest the eight consecutive slow movements with unwonted dramatic effects. They leave those to the earthquake of the final, ninth movement, though, even here, they respect the music's classical proportions and its context within the work as a whole, abjuring the pyrotechnic thunder-and-lightning that can sometimes obtrude in performances that are less confident about sustaining an hour of *largo*, *adagio*, *grave* and *lento*.

The key quality with the Cuarteto Casals is consistent poise – or, rather, poise coupled with a complete understanding of the implications of Haydn's textural colouring, the detail of his inflections and the way in which instrumental timbres interact, blend and diversify to create such a seamless tapestry of devotional integrity. The players use a minimal amount of vibrato, reserving it for emotional effect rather than as a standard tool. As a result, there is an arresting starkness, say, to the unison opening of the sixth sonata, 'Es ist vollbracht', resolving itself into a movement of beautifully maintained quietude. Within that soft spectrum of sonority, the Cuarteto Casals, as throughout this exceptional performance, find a balance of expressive subtlety and simplicity that strikes at the music's very heart. **Geoffrey Norris**

Iyer

'Mutations'

Spellbound and Sacrosanct, Cowrie Shells and the Shimmering Sea^a. *Vuln*, Part 2^b.

Mutations I-X^c. *When We're Gone*^b

Vijay Iyer *pf*^b *elec*^s

'Miranda Cuckson, Michi Wiancko *vn*^s

'Kyle Armbrust *va* 'Kivie Cahn-Lipman *vc*

ECM New Series (376 4798 (59' • DDD)



Vijay Iyer is the newly installed Franklin D and Florence Rosenblatt Professor

of the Arts at Harvard. His background is in jazz but of late he has moved towards a crossover style, blending to various degrees elements of contemporary jazz and classical music.

Spellbound and Sacrosanct, *Cowrie Shells and the Shimmering Sea* was originally written for trio and appeared on disc in 1995. The version included here is a reworking for solo piano and shows Iyer in reflective mood, the result an atmospheric, jazz-inflected nocturne. *Vuln*, Part 2, by contrast, dates from last year and is more robust (though the brief note provided by Iyer gives no hint of its inspiration or the whereabouts of Part 1; the bulk of the booklet is given over to session photographs). As with *When We're Gone* (also 2013), it juxtaposes the solo piano with 'electronically generated rhythms and textures'.

Mutations is by far the largest item, a 10-movement suite for piano, string quartet and electronics, premiered in

2005. The electronic component includes sampling of the players during the performance to allude to percussion or other instruments (the opening has an organ-like resonance), not altogether convincingly. Across its 40-minute-or-so span it covers a broad range of harmonic styles and textures but is a little too diffuse for its own good. Too often interesting ideas are not developed with sufficient focus and, as with the other items here, one is left with the impression of a series of (very) nicely played musical doodles. Great sound, as always, from ECM. **Guy Rickards**

Kagel

Three Piano Trios

Trio Image

AVI-Music © AVI8553278 (79' • DDD)



First off, it's worth saluting this young trio for making its CD debut with music as

non-commercial as this. The Darmstadt scene's most prominent Socratic fly, Mauricio Kagel wrote music designed to irritate. In the first half of his career, this involved weird stage directions and modes of performance so unconventional that the return to tonality in the last 25 years of his output is itself profoundly bizarre. The booklet-notes rightly point out that although their composition spans nearly the whole of this period, the three piano trios recorded here are so similar in conception and style (the first dates from 1984-85, the second from 2001 and the last from 2007, a year before Kagel's death) that one can hear them as a single over-arching work.

Kagel's strategy is to present clichéd tonal materials in awkward conjunctions, recalling (formally if not much else) the panel structures of Donatoni, or even late Feldman, from the same period. The question whether non sequitur and consciously inane nuddling can sustain many such large-scale structures (the longest single movement lasts 20 minutes) is one that Kagel probably wished to leave open. The over-reliance on gestural clichés (*forte* tremolos, cod-expressive *glissandos*, non-functional tonal chords hammered out *ferocissimo*) must also be deliberate. There is real pathos, certainly, in the last couple of minutes of the final trio and some trademark instrumental touches recall Kagel's earlier manner; but the overall approach now seems rather worn. Whether this rather unlovable music bears repeated listening I'm not certain but Trio Image

embrace it with such abandon that it's a question worth answering. **Fabrice Fitch**

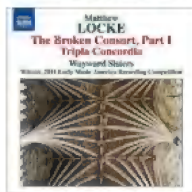
Locke

The Broken Consort, Part 1.

Tripla Concordia

Wayward Sisters

Naxos © 8 573020 (68' • DDD)



The Wayward Sisters are an edgy new American ensemble specialising in Baroque

music. Sisters in spirit maybe – their trusty theorist and booklet writer John Lenti is male. This, their debut disc, was made possible by winning the 2011 Early Music America/Naxos Recording Competition. By the standards of their recital programmes – advertised with titillating titles such as 'Frenzy and Fire' and 'The Naughty Lust' – Locke trios may seem rather sober fare. But the Wayward Sisters immediately impress with their evident rapport.

The Parley of Music (1981) and, more recently, The Locke Consort (2011) have recorded *The Broken Consort* with some distinction, the latter relying entirely on string players, bowed and plucked, whereas the Sisters mix strings with recorder, spiritedly played by Anne Timberlake, in Part 1. Their version is more 'broken', to be sure, but to my ears less true to Locke's music. In the opening movements of the G major *Tripla Concordia* Suite (Nos 1-4 in particular) the soprano recorder tone dominates the trio textures, its bright timbre tending to overwhelm the softer-edged sound of the strings, whereas in The Locke Consort's strings-only version, the violins maintain an easier parity. Happily, this acoustic effect abates in the subsequent suites and subsides altogether when Timberlake opts for an alto recorder in Nos 5 and 6. Nevertheless, there is much to admire, not least the elegance they bring to the G minor Suite and the irrepressible *joie de vivre* that characterises the Sarabandes, Hornpipe and Country Dance. I look forward to their next release.

Julie Anne Sadie

Selected comparisons:

Locke Consort (12/12) (METR) METCD1086

Parley of Instruments, Holman (HYPE) CDH55255

Martelli

String Quartets - No 1; No 2.

Terzetto. Prelude and Fugue^a

Pavão Quartet with

^aZoe Matthews vs ^aNicola Tait vs

Discadia © DISCA002 (76' • DDD)



Anyone familiar with the repertoire played by string quartets at weddings will have

heard the clever and idiomatic popular song arrangements of Carlo Martelli (b1935). From the 1960s he was active, too, as a composer for films. But before that he had established a reputation as a composer of chamber and symphonic music. The two quartets recorded here were written when Martelli was still in his teens and show a remarkable natural talent, coupled with an imaginative grasp of the possibilities of string instruments (he is an accomplished viola player). The First Quartet is crammed full of musical events, bound together by clear motivic connections. It's highly individual music and wouldn't have sounded at all old-fashioned in the England of the early 1950s. The Second Quartet is even more impressive: the invention is more pointed, the contrasts more vivid, and the dialogue between the instruments develops, at times, a compelling intensity.

The *Terzetto* is a lighter work, with the same irrepressible invention as the quartets; its finale is great fun to listen to. Composed much later, in 2003, the Prelude and Fugue demonstrates that Martelli has lost none of his enthusiasm in writing for strings. The extremely fierce start to the fugue is contrasted with different, more emollient subjects, and the return at the end to the material of the Prelude is managed in masterly fashion.

Throughout, the Pavão Quartet and colleagues give an impression of energy and enjoyment. Their expertise is finely geared to following each twist and turn of this eventful, appealing music. **Duncan Druce**

Mendelssohn

'The Complete Works for Cello and Piano'

Cello Sonatas - No 1, Op 45; No 2, Op 58. Assai tranquillo. Lied ohne Worte, Op 109. Variations concertantes, Op 17

Marie Macleod vs Martin Sturfält pf

Stone Records © 5060192 780383 (63' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Västerås Concert Hall,

Sweden, September 9 & 10, 2009



Mendelssohn's music for cello and piano runs the full gamut, from simple lyrical

pieces to large-scale Beethovenian sonata structures. This poses a challenge for his interpreters, which Macleod and Sturfält

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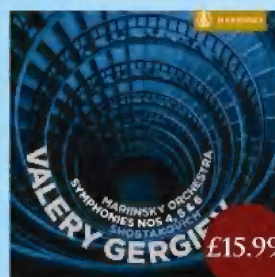


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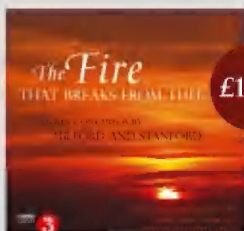
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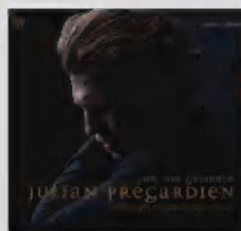


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Alexander Hülshoff and his colleagues keep sentimentality 'on the back burner' in David Popper's Cello Suites

meet triumphantly whenever the music is lively or agitated. Sturfält tosses off the many quick passages with nonchalant ease, and Macleod finds just the right passionate tone for the more intensely emotional moments, for example the minor-key episode in the *Variations concertantes*. Together, they are adept at keeping a sense of momentum, whether the music is energetic or flowing more calmly.

The duo is recorded quite closely; this, combined with Sturfält's insistence on clarity, gives, in places, an unsuitably dry quality to the sound, at the opening of the Second Sonata, for instance. And where

Mendelssohn creates a nocturnal atmosphere – in the second movements of both sonatas – the effect seems rather matter-of-fact. In the Op 45 *Andante* the three-note motif isn't phrased away to form a sigh, and in both sonatas I found myself wishing that Sturfält could find a softer, more delicate touch. Similarly, those mysterious Mendelssohnian moments where everything quietsens for a moment (as in the coda of the Second Sonata's first movement) sound rather perfunctory.

Despite these quibbles, the performances are enjoyable and invigorating. Marie Macleod has a fine way of spinning a *legato*

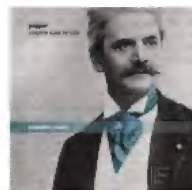
line; her lyrical melodies all sound warm and appealing. And the wonderful, Bach-inspired *Adagio* of Op 58 is played with inspired conviction: eloquent cello recitative, and the chorale intoned with magnificent spread chords. **Duncan Druce**

Popper

'Complete Suites for Cello'

Suite for Two Cellos, Op 16. Tempo di marcia – Op 16a; Op 16a/bis. Waltz Suite, Op 60. Suite, Op 69. Suite, Op 16bis. Im Walde. Requiem, Op 66

Alexander Hülshoff, Martin Rummel, Bertin Christelbauer vs Mari Kato pf
Paladino ® ② PMR0007 (110' • DDD)



David Popper (1843–1913) was a Bohemian cellist whose work as

a soloist, chamber musician and teacher was lauded all over Europe during his lifetime. Since his death, though, it has been largely forgotten, which may have something to do with the substantive part of his music being more defined by the cult of personality that followed him wherever he went than the depth of the music itself.

Popper's work is largely Classical in style – more Haydn than the Brahms or even Sarasate that it probably ought to have been. Although the cello works are a combination of either studies for aspiring cellists or virtuoso pieces for display purposes, fundamentally they are most at home in the salon. Therefore, they transport you more to a place and time than enmesh you in musical bulk. The pieces show what consistent sonorities the instrument is capable of when written for by a cellist: there are whole passages driven solely by its tone, and many sections in the suites for two cellos where Popper writes into the music sonorous effects where the whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

Given that the pieces are largely insubstantial, they are played here by Alexander Hülshoff, Martin Rummel and Bertin Christelbauer with great elegance and poise as well as, when necessary, great humour and a very appealing avuncular manner. The general sentimentality that could seep into a performance seeking to make more than necessary of these pieces is kept on a back burner throughout the disc, only being brought to the fore for the one piece to which it is due – the final *Requiem* for three cellos. **Caroline Gill**

Edgar Moreau

'Play'

Bloch From Jewish Life – No 1, Prayer **Chopin** Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op 3
Dvořák Silent Woods, Op 68 No 5 B173 **Elgar** Salut d'amour, Op 12 **Fauré** Elégie, Op 24
Françaix Mouvement perpétuel **Glazunov** Chant du ménestrel, Op 71 **Gluck** Orfeo ed Euridice – Dance of the Blessed Spirits **Massenet** Mélodie, Op 10 No 5 **Monti** Csárdás **Paganini** Variations on a Theme by Rossini **Popper** Dance of the Elves, Op 39 **Poulenc** Les chemins de l'amour **Rostropovich** Humoresque, Op 5 **Saint-Saëns** Samson et Dalila – Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix **Schubert** Ave Maria, D839 **Tchaikovsky** Valse sentimentale, Op 51 No 6
Edgar Moreau *vc* **Pierre-Yves Hodiou** *pf*
Erato Ⓢ 2564 63695-8 (73' • DDD)



The 20-year-old French cellist Edgar Moreau, silver medallist at the 2011

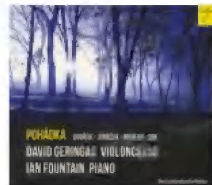
Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, launches his recording career with this disc of short character pieces rather than making any more emphatic statement with major concertos or sonatas. As he explains, he and his recital partner Pierre-Yves Hodiou have derived pleasure from playing these miniatures in their concerts, and 'they are also an integral part of the cello repertoire'.

Some, too, are much more than mere encore bonbons, particularly when you consider that they include Fauré's *Elégie*. For my money, that is the real meat of this 17-track CD, given a performance that capitalises on Moreau's mature tone, lyrical polish and romantic leanings. Both he and Hodiou exercise eloquent restraint here: the emotional climax is heartfelt but it is also held in the perspective of a quietly pensive, poignant interpretation. At precisely the same length, Dvořák's *Silent Woods*, the composer's own arrangement of one of his *From the Bohemian Forest* set for piano duet, asserts a similar affinity with the way the cello can express itself sublimely without raising its voice or tickling the ear with dazzling acrobatics.

Moreau has allotted proportionate space in this programme to the gentler realms of the repertoire, whether in original cello works or in transcriptions, though he also reveals his athletic prowess in such items as Monti's *Csárdás*, Rostropovich's *Humoresque* and Popper's *Elftanz*, with the final Chopin *Introduction et Polonaise brillante* combining a gift for mellifluous line with a sparkle and a spirited rhythmic impetus. **Geoffrey Norris**

'Pohádka'

Dvořák Rondo, Op 94 B171. Silent Woods, Op 68 No 5 B173. Songs my mother taught me, Op 55 B104 No 4 **Janáček** Pohádka (Fairy Tale). Presto **Mahler** Kindertotenlieder (arr Derevianko). Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen – 'Ging' heut morgen übers Feld. Rückert-Lieder – Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen
Suk Two Pieces, Op 3
David Geringas *vc*
Ian Fountain *pf*
Es-Dur Ⓢ ES2045 (69' • DDD)



The principal draw here is David Geringas's reflective and deeply affecting

version of the third of Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder*, 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' (I am lost to the world), as inwardly probing a rendition as any involving the human voice, the sensitively spun cello implying every last vestige of withdrawn emotion implied in Rückert's poem. A beautiful cello sound too, seamlessly bowed and velvet in texture, with perfectly judged support from pianist Ian Fountain. Geringas also plays the complete *Kindertotenlieder* in Viktor Derevianko's cello transcription, which doesn't work quite so well, principally because, unlike *Songs on the Death of Children*, 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' weaves its magic with a mere prompt from just the title. Those opening words are really critical, and the music alone can do the rest. By contrast, *Kindertotenlieder* cries out for its text, excepting perhaps 'Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen' (I often think they have only just gone out...), which, in purely musical terms, works well enough as an instrumental solo. So does 'Ging heut' morgen übers Feld' (I went this morning over the field), understandably so, as it fits both its parent *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and the first movement of the First Symphony that grew out of it.

Geringas's programme sets off to Josef Suk's Ballade and Serenade, music that is by turns passionate and playful, proceeds via Suk's father-in-law Dvořák (the poetic *Silent Woods*, the lilting Rondo and that lyrical perennial 'Songs my mother taught me') to the teasing antics of the hugely imaginative *Pohádka* by Janáček. All the performances are expertly dispatched from a technical standpoint, as well as musically satisfying and well recorded; and if the programme context appeals, I can't imagine you being disappointed.

Rob Cowan

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Steinbacher returns

German violinist **Arabella Steinbacher** will make a welcome return to the CD shelves with the imminent arrival of her new recordings of Mozart's Third, Fourth and Fifth Violin Concertos (to be reviewed in a forthcoming issue) but has been back in the studio since cutting that disc, taping Franck and Strauss violin sonatas with her regular performance partner, the pianist Robert Kulek. Pentatone will release both discs, the latter in September.



• More from Elgar's Asylum days

Following the first of its discs featuring music written by Elgar during his time working at the Powick Asylum (see page 51), **Somm Records** will release a second disc of orchestral works from the period featuring the orchestra Elgar played in shortly before working at Powick, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. The disc will be conducted by Barry Collett; exact repertoire and release details are to be confirmed.

• Suites on baroque cello(s)

Cellist **David Watkin**, known as section principal of the English Baroque Soloists and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, has recorded Bach's cello suites for download-only label Resonus Classics. Watkin was permitted use of the Royal Academy of Music's five-string Amati instrument, formerly belonging to Amaryllis Fleming, for his recording of the Sixth Suite. The recordings will be available to download from Resonus in September.

• Reich on vinyl

Linn Records will re-release its 2011 recording of Steven Reich's *Six Marimbas*, *Vermont Counterpoint* and *Electric Counterpoint*, (08/11) all performed by Marimba player **Kuniko**, on a vinyl LP in September – the first classical LP from the label since it issued a sampler in 2013.

Carlo Maria Giulini

Richard Osborne pays tribute to the great Italian conductor who started his career as a viola player, headed La Scala, Milan, and worked with the world's greatest orchestras

A modest man and a deeply religious one, Carlo Maria Giulini (1914–2005) would not have enjoyed being called an icon. ‘We are not musical geniuses,’ he once said, ‘we are not composers. We are performers. We serve and we should serve with love.’

An idealist whose repertory included an unusually high proportion of sacred works, he declined to conduct music which lacked a ‘human’ dimension. It was the same with institutions. After a 10-day residency with the Hallé Orchestra in 1968, he wrote to Sir John Barbiroli, ‘Rarely have I had occasion to work in an atmosphere where the levels of courtesy, professionalism and humanity have reached such heights’. Compare that with his remark, ‘Success at La Scala, Milan is always without joy, without love, without gratitude’.

Paradoxically, Milan was where Giulini glimpsed his ideal. The year was 1955, the occasion Luchino Visconti’s new production of Verdi’s *La traviata* with Maria Callas in the title-role. Giulini recalled: ‘It was slow, fatiguing, meticulous work, done not to win popular success but for theatre in its deepest expression.’ Three years later he and Visconti prepared a now legendary production of Verdi’s *Don Carlos* for London’s Royal Opera House.

One Covent Garden musician recalled the ‘singing quality’ of Giulini’s conducting and ‘a wonderful springing rhythm’. ‘Even in *staccato* passages he would give the instruction *staccato, ma sempre legato* which somehow we understood quite easily!’ This was Giulini’s Italian inheritance, learnt at first hand from men such as Tullio Serafin and Victor de Sabata. It’s a style of conducting in which strong pulses are complemented by the subtlest kind of melodic shaping – an art apt to music which is both folksy and sublime. Even in those days, Giulini’s tempi could be slower than the norm yet the direction of travel was always clear from the very first beat. As Plácido Domingo observed: ‘When Giulini takes a slow tempo out of conviction and pursues it with vigour, it’s every bit as exciting as a fast one.’

Giulini was a viola player by training. By the age of 18 he was playing in Rome’s fabled Augusteum Orchestra under the endlessly exacting Bernardino Molinari and a roster of guest conductors that included Furtwängler, de Sabata, Kleiber, Klemperer, Richard Strauss and Bruno Walter. (Playing Brahms as a back-desk viola player under Walter, he recalled, was like playing a solo concerto, so solicitous was Walter of the music’s inner being.) He told me: ‘Perhaps because I’m a viola player, I think the inside string parts are

particularly important. To me the other instruments give you the physiognomy of the music; but for its bones, its inner structure, you must look to the inside parts.’

In the recording studio Giulini found a second Visconti in the shape of Walter Legge, greatest of gramophone *régisseurs*. In 1959 they made what is arguably the finest of all recordings of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, superbly cast and scrupulously produced for the microphones. Equally revered was their 1963 studio account of Verdi’s Requiem, a trademark Giulini piece. Orchestral players appreciated and occasionally exploited Giulini’s gentlemanly persona while recognising the fires banked up within and the often alarming intensity of his music-making. Hearing his

occasional forays into the music of Stravinsky, Falla and Ravel you realise that, had he been so minded, he would have been one of the great virtuosos of the baton.

It was in 1968 that he turned his back on live opera, tired of a world in which jet travel was allowing artists to be here today, gone tomorrow. Herbert von Karajan had already withdrawn to his own festival fastness in Salzburg. No impresario himself, Giulini was reliant on others. Holland Festival director Peter Diamand was a close ally, yet ironically it was a disastrous 1965 Holland Festival staging of *Don Giovanni* which first convinced Giulini that the new enemy within was the self-promoting stage director. ‘The real producer is the composer’ was his axiom, and he never budged. So it chanced that from 1969 to his retirement in 1998 it was as an orchestral conductor that he mostly made his living, first in Chicago, later in Vienna, Los Angeles, Berlin and Milan.

Brahms was a long-standing preoccupation, both the symphonies and the chamber music, which Giulini the viola player knew from within. His 1969 Chicago recording of the Fourth Symphony was an early landmark, much admired by Sir Simon Rattle, who later worked with Giulini in Los Angeles: ‘It is one of those performances in which you feel the musicians are playing, not the notes, but the story of their lives.’ The late Brahms cycle which Giulini recorded with the Vienna Philharmonic is the slowest on record yet one of the most cogent. Sadly, by 1991 few critics (*Gramophone*’s Edward Seckerson was a distinguished exception) were willing to give the time of day to such ‘dated’ music-making.

Those late Brahms performances owed something to Giulini’s love affair with the music of Bruckner which manifested itself in his post-opera years. A northern Italian whose maternal grandmother was Austrian,

‘It’s a style of conducting in which strong pulses are complemented by the subtlest kind of melodic shaping’



Giulini was well versed in the Austrian musical culture. Schubert's influence on Bruckner, and what can loosely be called the 'religious' dimension of Bruckner's music, also exerted their pull. Giulini's live 1984 Berlin Philharmonic performance of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony (on Testament, 4/10), a version I hadn't previously encountered, emerged as my BBC Radio 3 *Building a Library* choice in 2011. It is an awesome affair.

As the pulse of Giulini's music-making broadened, so his command of line and argument grew ever stronger. Yet, as I've already suggested, 'early' Giulini was never that quick. It's said that his 1982 Los Angeles recording of Verdi's *Falstaff* is somewhat 'autumnal'. In fact, the pacing is pretty well identical with that of his 1955 Edinburgh Festival performance recently released by ICA (10/12).

For Giulini, Shakespeare was the world's greatest playwright, Verdi its greatest theatre composer. Which is why *Falstaff* was for him the celebration, not of a series of comic pranks, but of the larger comedy of life itself, now genial, now dark-edged. No conductor has brought to the concluding Windsor Forest scene so powerful a sense of the opera's roots in the sacred and the numinous – an insight towards which Shakespeare's shade, and Verdi's, may have already nodded their grateful Amens. ⑥



THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Verdi *Falstaff*

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DEFINING MOMENTS

•1932 – The viola player

Aged 18, joins Rome's revered Augusteum Orchestra.

•1944 – The liberation of Rome

The young survivor is invited to make his conducting debut in a concert which ends with Brahms's tragic Fourth Symphony.

•1955 – The promised land

Conducts Verdi's *La traviata* at La Scala, Milan, in a new production by Luchino Visconti with Maria Callas as Violetta.

•1969 – Renunciation

Abandons live opera-house work.

•1974 – Enter Bruckner

Conducts Bruckner's Second Symphony in Chicago before a tour and recording with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in Europe.

Instrumental



Jeremy Nicholas reviews Paganini's Op 1 Caprices played on a flute:

'Marina Piccinini is the Heifetz of the flute. Her fluency and articulation are quite literally breathtaking' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



Bryce Morrison listens to a young Georgian's debut solo recording:

'The entire performance breathes new and exhilarating life into a familiar masterpiece'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**

Alkan

Douze Etudes dans tous les tons mineurs, Op 39
– No 1, Comme le vent; No 2, En rythme molossique; No 3, Scherzo diabolico; Nos 8-10, Concerto for Solo Piano

Vincenzo Maltempo *pf*

Piano Classics Ⓜ PCL0061 (69' • DDD)



For Vincenzo Maltempo there are few reservations regarding Alkan's

genius. He admits that Alkan's works, which range from the epic and monstrous to the miniature, provoke both hate and love, but goes on to refer to the Concerto for solo piano as 'one of the peaks of the piano literature of all time'.

In the last in a series of Alkan recitals, his playing flashes with summer lightning and a freer, more expressive romantic leeway than either Ronald Smith (who he praises *en passant* – EMI, 1/70) and Marc-André Hamelin (who he oddly ignores – Hyperion, A/07). His reflexes are nervy and rapid, and he dispatches every outlandish difficulty with an astonishing ease and fleetness. Alkan's cruel demand for strict tempo is replaced by something more impulsive and his silvery-toned Yamaha allows him feats of virtuosity unknown to lesser mortals, intimidated by the composer's hermetic world, that of a true misanthrope. 'Comme le vent' is reeled off like so much child's play but in 'En rythme molossique', Maltempo's measured tempo is totally in keeping with its pungent and insistent rhythm. Goethe may have believed that small is beautiful but for Alkan the reverse is true (despite his miniatures) – an in some ways sardonic curse suggested by Maltempo's dazzling and idiosyncratic performances, finely recorded and presented by Piano Classics.

Bryce Morrison

Chopin

Etudes – Op 10; Op 25

Vladimir Ashkenazy *pf*

Melodiya Ⓜ MELCD100 2108 (62' • ADD)
Recorded 1959/60



This legendary disc was made in 1959 when Ashkenazy, aged 22, suffered

confinement behind the Iron Curtain. His early recordings were described in *Gramophone* as the pianistic equivalent of David Oistrakh, though they were later rejected by Ashkenazy as facile and little more than a potential only realised later in life. Sent out as a star musical ambassador, Ashkenazy came to resent his use as an emblem of Russian musical supremacy that showed too little concern for his own person, and his book *Beyond Frontiers* is a devastating indictment of life under the Communist regime.

Yet, like Pollini, who also regarded his first recording of the Chopin Etudes with contempt (later taking a kinder view – Testament, 1/12), Ashkenazy might just possibly repent his early dismissal of what is surely among the most astonishing of all piano discs. Musically and pianistically, this is about as flawless as it is possible to be, suggesting a mastery unknown outside Russia. Wherever you turn, you listen as if for the first time, whether to those études demanding the ultimate in poetry (Op 10 Nos 3 and 6 and Op 25 No 7) or to every teeming note in études such as Op 10 No 2 or Op 25 No 6 (thirds), where his fleetness and musical finesse create an unforgettable impression. What light and shade he brings to Op 10 No 1. Op 10 No 4, less manic than from Richter or Argerich, or Cziffra's pyrotechnical histrionics, is a wonder of strength and control. What poetic grace in Op 25 No 1; what freedom and rhapsody in the glorious central section of Op 25 No 5. His tempo in Op 25 No 11 may be intimidating yet everything is given time to breathe and speak. The concluding étude in C minor moves from a distanced opening to a massive build-up, a novel and arresting interpretation.

So while you may treasure your records by the inimitable Cortot and early Pollini, Ashkenazy's first of two discs (the later one for Decca) is surely the one to have, particularly if you wish to rediscover the endless felicities that lie beneath the surface of Chopin's formidably demanding Etudes. Finely remastered and with ample breathing space between each study, this represents a wonder of musical and technical perfection; the two inextricably united. **Bryce Morrison**

Chopin

Three Impromptus. Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op 66. Nocturnes – No 3, Op 9 No 3; No 7, Op 27 No 1; No 8, Op 27 No 2; No 10, Op 32 No 2; No 14, Op 48 No 2. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58

Louis Lortie *pf*

Chandos Ⓜ CHAN10813 (77' • DDD)



In this third volume of Chopin, Louis Lortie offers a bouquet of Nocturnes and

Impromptus alongside the Third Sonata on a warmly recorded Fazioli, which possesses plenty of clarity without perhaps the range of colour of a good Steinway.

He begins with the first of the Op 27 Nocturnes, which has great finesse and a finely honed melodic line. Turn to Pires, though, and the temperature rises somewhat, the piece gaining greater urgency from her surging left-hand accompaniment. Lortie has a very particular view of Chopin: Classical, emotionally cool, fingery and clear-textured. But if these qualities suggest a certain Gallic finesse, then you only need to turn to Cortot in the Op 51 Impromptu to discover the real thing: at a slightly faster pace, Cortot allows the sinuous lines to unfurl with such gloriously subtle *rubato* that Lortie (and virtually everyone else on the planet) sounds a touch self-conscious.

But it's in the Third Sonata that Lortie's approach is least convincing. The gauntlet-throwing-down opening sounds tepid when

compared to Cortot in 1931 or Argerich in 1965 or, from more recent times, pianists as different as Fliter, Hamelin and Freire. It also means that the extreme contrasts of this first movement are underplayed: surely it is here, of all pieces, that you want Chopin to scorch. The *Scherzo* works better, Lortie treating it as a fingery *moto perpetuo*, though he can't compete with the panache of Argerich or the taut virtuosity of Hamelin, who also finds more contrast with the Trio. And again, in the slow movement, he sounds loose-limbed by comparison with the fierce rhetoric of Hamelin, Fliter, Freire and Argerich. Even in the finale, where his steady speed is not out of keeping, he isn't a patch on Fliter when it comes to colour and incident. Lortie is a pianist I've long admired but here, sadly, he seems mismatched with the repertoire. **Harriet Smith**

Nocturnes – selected comparison:

Pires (10/96) (DG) 447 096-2GH2 or 477 9568GM2

Pf Son No 3, Impromptu, Op 51 – selected comparison:

Cortot (6/92) (EMI) 767359-2

Pf Son No 3 – selected comparisons:

Freire (8/02) (DECC) 470 288-2DH

Hamelin (2/09) (HYPER) CDA67706

Argerich, r1965 (EMI) 556805-2 or 094044-2

Fliter (EMI) 514899-2

Chopin

'Vol 2 – Ballades'

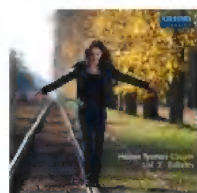
Four Ballades, Barcarolle, Op 60.

Four Mazurkas, Op 24. Nocturne No 3,

Op 9 No 3. Polonaise-Fantaisie, Op 61

Hélène Tysman *pf*

Oehms Ⓢ Ⓢ OC894 (84' • DDD)



For the second volume in her Chopin series, the young French pianist Hélène Tysman

focuses on the Ballades, interweaving them with an array of other masterpieces. Coincidentally, she plays the Op 9 No 3 Nocturne that features on Louis Lortie's recital (reviewed above). She is tauter than Lortie but there's a relatively restricted colour palette, and in the coruscating minor-key section neither is as fevered as Pires.

Tysman is clearly in love with Chopin's music and she produces some lovely sounds (well recorded), particularly in the quieter pages. But at times she seems so intent on revealing the beauty of every phrase that she loses sight of the structure – a particular issue in the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*. Sometimes she seems to underplay some of Chopin's more outlandish experiments. In the fourth of the Op 24 Mazurkas, for instance, rather than thriving on the

tension created by its chromaticism, she seems determined to bring this acerbic little number into line with its siblings; while elsewhere in the set (notably Nos 1 and 3) she has a tendency to overdo the *rubato*. Turn to Janis or – even more strikingly – early Rubinstein and you have a much greater impression of the grittiness of these dances.

On the whole, the Third Ballade comes off better than the others. The tumult of the Second, following an aptly hushed introduction, is distinctly lacking in angst when you compare her with Zimmerman or Perahia; and the First, while possessing a nicely haloed tone in the quieter moments, lacks the colour and the imaginative sense of narrative that you find in the finest readings. **Harriet Smith**

Nocturnes – selected comparison:

Pires (10/96) (DG) 447 096-2GH2 or 477 9568GM2

Mazurkas – selected comparisons:

Rubinstein, r1930s (9/39) (EMI) 730250-2 or 455334-2; (6/01) (NAXO) 8 110656/7

Janis (EMI) 556196-2 or 602898-2

Ballades – selected comparisons:

Zimmerman (10/88) (DG) 423 090-2GH

Perahia (12/94) (SONY) 88697 64823-2

Liszt

'Verdi: Complete Paraphrases and Free Transcriptions'

Verdi/Liszt Don Carlos – Coro di festa e marcia funebre, S435. I Lombardi (Jérusalem) – Salve Maria, S431 (first version). Rigoletto – Concert Paraphrase, S434. Ernani – Première paraphrase de concert, S431a; Deuxième paraphrase de concert, S432. Il trovatore – Miserere, S433. Réminiscences de Simone Boccanegra, S438. Aida – Danza sacra e Duetto finale, S436

Rinaldo Zhok *pf*

Odradek Ⓢ ODRCD309 (76' • DDD)



Odradek is a non-profit artist-controlled label that gives all

proceeds to the artist after production and distribution costs are recuperated. Refreshing – but I wish their small studio had something bigger than a Steinway B for this uniformly excellent recital. Its bright treble is not matched by the lack of colour and resonance in the lower bass which some of Liszt's more extravagant pages require to be heard at their best.

This, as far as I am aware, is the only release to have the 'complete' Verdi-Liszt (not 'Liszt-Verdi' as the disc title mistakenly has it) paraphrases on a single disc, though it omits the second version of 'Salve Maria' (from *I Lombardi* or, if you

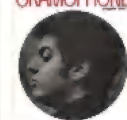
GRAMOPHONE Archive

Alkan's Solo Piano Concerto

Three recordings that came before Vincenzo Maltempo's – and how Gramophone rated them

GRAMOPHONE

JANUARY 1970



Alkan Concerto for Solo Piano
Ronald Smith *pf*

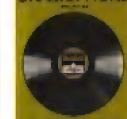
HMV Ⓢ HQS1204 (29s 1d)

The power of this music is enormous. Perhaps the most

original section comes late on in the first-movement development, where the music suggests Sibelius at his coldest and greyest. The finale is a bolero of quite desperate difficulty and enormous impetus. I kept thinking there must be two Ronald Smiths at the keyboard, so complex is the texture of the writing. The very first bars compel one's attention, and you will want to play the whole record over and over again. **Roger Fiske**

GRAMOPHONE

APRIL 1973



Alkan Concerto for Solo Piano

John Ogdon *pf*

RCA Ⓢ LSB4078 (£1.71)

What fun it would be to hear this concerto from pianistic wizards

like Horowitz, Michelangeli or Pollini! Neither Ogdon nor Smith are quite in that class, though bearing in mind the diabolical difficulties both emerge as heroes. My immediate reaction to the first movement was that it sounded nobler music from Smith with his sturdy rhythm, control of detail and architectural sense. Since colour contrasts and prestidigitation count for more than architectural shaping in the finale, I'm sure Ogdon is the victor here. He has just that extra touch of fantasy and/or diablerie that Smith finds it harder to suggest.

Joan Chissell



AWARDS 2007

Alkan Concerto for Solo Piano

Marc-André Hamelin *pf*

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67569 (68' • DDD)

Hamelin now trumps his previous ace (Music & Arts,

8/93) with a performance of the Concerto of such brilliance and lucidity that one can only listen in awe and amazement. Scaling even the most ferocious hurdles with yards to spare, he is blessedly free to explore the very heart of Alkan's bewildering interplay of austerity and monstrous elaboration. You can only marvel at such a unique mix of blazing if nonchalantly deployed virtuosity and poetic conviction. All this is superbly recorded and presented, prompting some not unreasonable conjecture: if Liszt feared Alkan's mastery as a pianist, he may well have feared Hamelin's. **Bryce Morrison**

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prefer, *Jérusalem*), and the *Agnus Dei* from the Requiem can only be accessed as a download. Frustratingly, it would have overrun the maximum disc timing by just 1'13".

It is greatly to the credit of Rinaldo Zhok (b1980, Trieste, and a name new to me) that he is able to create such a luminous singing tone in this small acoustic, even at his relatively cautious tempi (the *Rigoletto* Paraphrase is almost two minutes slower than Ginzburg or Thibaudet *inter alia*). These sometimes lead to a loss of dramatic tension – Ogdon provides this in spades in his famous 1965 recording of *Réminiscences de Simone Boccanegra* – but Zhok's always elegant playing brings its own rewards, the vocal origins of the music always uppermost and the performances more deeply satisfying than many as a result.

Jeremy Nicholas

Rigoletto Paraphrase – selected comparisons:

Ginzburg (A/O8) (APR) APR5667

Thibaudet (8/11) (DAL) DSPRCD061

Boccanegra Réminiscences – selected comparison:

Ogdon (11/66th, 1/13) (EMI) 704637-2;

(7/98) (TEST) SBT1133

Paganini

24 Caprices, Op 1 (arr Piccinini)

Marina Piccinini fl

Avie (M) ② AV2284 (100' • DDD)



How on earth does one transfer Paganini's Op 1, a vade mecum of idiomatic violin

pyrotechnics, to the flute? Though some inevitably work better than others, a high proportion of the 24 Caprices, perhaps surprisingly, sound in Marina Piccinini's resourceful arrangements as though they might have been specially written for the instrument. Among the best are No 5 in A minor, the *presto* section of No 11, No 17 (its *sostenuto* opening rewritten to provide an alternative to the violin's long held minims) and the famous final A minor variations of No 24 (Var 8 uses *staccato* tonguing to convey the violin's *pizzicato* and *arco* exchanges).

Ms Piccinini is the Heifetz of the flute. Her fluency and articulation are quite literally breathtaking – no cheating in any of the innumerable and lengthy pages of rapid passagework, every note as clear as a bell – putting one in mind of the great John Amadio. With a liquid, honeyed tone throughout its considerable range (down to a low B natural at the end of Caprice No 2) and superbly recorded, I have rarely heard the solo flute sound quite as beautiful as

this. The Caprices in her hands emerge as a collection of miniature tone-poems each with its distinct character.

Just five seconds shy of 100 minutes is too much at a single sitting, no matter how beguiling the playing – I suggest a disc at a time – but whatever, do try and hear Marina Piccinini who, as well as being an extraordinary musician, is also, I learn from the booklet, 'a 36th generation Shaolin Fighting Monk'. No, really. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Prokofiev

Piano Sonata No 4. Ten Pieces, Op 12.

Three Pieces, Op 96. *Sarcasms*, Op 17.

Fantasia Improvisation on Themes from Rimsky-Korsakov's Sheherazade

Evgenia Rubinova pf

AVI-Music (C) AVI8553303 (71' • DDD)



Evgenia Rubinova's wide-ranging recital commences with the Op 12 Pieces,

composed when Prokofiev was 15, their balletic charms already spiced with mischief-making. These are followed by the ultra-Russian Fourth Sonata (it was one of Richter's specialities), with a dark speculation at its centre; for Rubinova 'one of the best slow movements ever written'. The *Sarcasms* are an early and extreme example of Prokofiev's savagely cultivated bad-boy image, a porcupine personality, all spines and quills, and a hard-hitting retort to past Russian romanticism exemplified by figures such as Glazunov and Arensky. Finally, there are the three pieces of Op 96 and the *Sheherazade* Fantasy, arranged by Rubinova.

Throughout her challenging programme the pianist plays with total empathy and assurance. Whether relishing the shock of the new in *Sarcasms* or, most of all, delighting in the teasing turns of direction in the Op 12 Pieces, her performances, freer than many other more severely metronomic offerings, is masterly. Hear her in the Mazurka, a playful distortion of a genre immortalised by Chopin; in the enchanting Capriccio, where Prokofiev spins one of his most delectable melodies through a maze of off-beat rhythm and harmony; or in the concluding Scherzo, a dream encore, if only for those, like Rubinova, able to command its wild whirl of events. The Sonata is no less successful, and if Op 96 and the *Sheherazade* Fantasy make for a refreshing change, they are surely over-extended. AVI's sound is a model of clarity and refinement.

Bryce Morrison

Reger

'Organ Works, Vol 14'

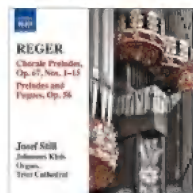
Five Easy Preludes and Fugues, Op 56.

52 Easy Chorale Preludes, Op 67 – Nos 1-15

Josef Still org

Naxos (S) 8 572907 (73' • DDD)

Played on the Klais organ of Trier Cathedral



As the song says, 'Nice and easy does it', except that for those who perform

Reger's organ music, assessing relevant degrees of technical demand is no simple matter. Vol 14 of Naxos's complete Reger organ works series consists of the *Five Easy Preludes and Fugues*, Op 56, and the first 15 of his *52 Easy Chorale Preludes*, Op 67. This generously filled disc is cleanly recorded and makes a satisfying programme. This is Reger in a generally ruminative mood, eschewing the more verbose, gargantuan and monumental elements of his style, reducing his tendency for rhetorical flamboyance into concentrated – though still contrapuntally rich – miniatures, none lasting longer than five and a half minutes.

Josef Still, organist of Trier Cathedral, pilots his 67-stop Klais with complete assurance, drawing a wide range of softer timbres, although there are times when uncoupled pedal registers sound woolly. This is less of an issue in the faster music which require heavier registrations. The highlight in this category is the D minor Fugue, which dances along in 3/8 time, while occasionally just teetering on the edge of tonality before being reined in for a more conventional conclusion, including a *tierce de Picardie*. The Lutheran chorale settings range from the almost subterranean *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* through the simple, limpid beauty of *Gott des Himmels und der Erden* to the lively rolling triplets of *Jauchz, Erd' und Himmel, jubel!*.

Despite the cavernous acoustic, Still takes great care to balance the contrapuntal textures, ensuring that the chorale melodies stand proud.

Malcolm Riley

Tamar Beraia

Bach/Busoni Chaconne Beethoven Piano

Sonata No 10, Op 14 No 2 Haydn Keyboard

Sonata, HobXVI/37 Liszt Mephisto Waltz No 1,

'Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke', S514

Schumann Carnival, Op 9

Tamar Beraia pf

eaSonus (C) EAS29271 (78' • DDD)

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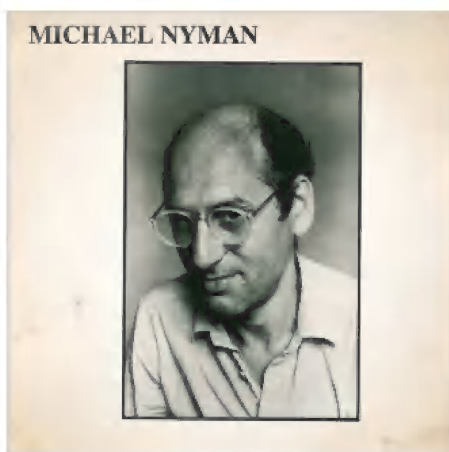
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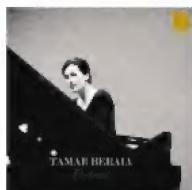
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Plenty to offer: Tamar Beraia's debut solo recital pleases Bryce Morrison with its 'dazzling virtuosity', 'exhilarating life' and fine sound



For her debut album, Tamar Beraia, a 27-year-old Georgian pianist, offers a

richly comprehensive programme. Her quicksilver brilliance lends a special wit and charm to Haydn's D major Sonata, HobXVI/37, and she is admirably sensitive in the contrasting gravity of the central *Largo e sostenuto*. Beethoven's early G major Sonata, Op 14 No 2, is, again, as fleet and dextrous as you could wish even if, ideally, you miss the wealth of character, of light and shade, of Kempff, while Liszt's First *Mephisto Waltz* is dispatched with skittering aplomb.

However, Beraia truly comes into her own in her winged and delectable performance of Schumann's *Carnaval*. Here any reservations concerning surface facility vanish. Dazzling virtuosity (try 'Papillons' and 'Pause') are complemented by the most stylish voicing and inflections ('Valse noble'). The entire performance breathes new and exhilarating life into a familiar masterpiece.

The Bach-Busoni Chaconne is impetuous and individual, light years away from, say, Michelangeli's autocracy. Yet

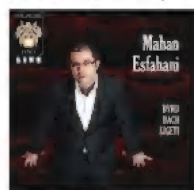
it is entirely successful in its own terms. Hopefully we shall be hearing much more of this exceptional artist. BR-Klassik's sound for eaSonus leaves nothing to be desired and Carmen Delia Romero's glowing tribute to Beraia is richly deserved.

Bryce Morrison

Mahan Esfahani



JS Bach Musikalisches Opfer, BWV1079 – Ricercar a 3; Ricercar a 6; Canon a 2 per tonos
Byrd Clarifica me, Pater I-III. John come kiss me now. Pavan and Galliard – No 1; No 5. The Marche before the Battell. Fancie (My Ladye Nevells Book, No 41). Callino casturame. Fantasia (Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, No 52). Walsingham
Ligeti Passacaglia ungherese. Continuum. Hungarian Rock
Mahan Esfahani *hpd*
Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0066 (75' • DDD)
Recorded live, May 3, 2013



A critic reviewing Mahan Esfahani's 2013 Wigmore Hall recital of short pieces by Byrd, Bach and Ligeti (from which this disc derives) felt that the programme would have been more effectively contrasted had

the three Ligeti works been interspersed among the others, rather than presented in chronological sequence. Oddly enough, I received this release as randomly numbered lossless digital files and initially wrote my review assuming that that this seemingly 'mixed and matched' sequence was the actual running order, and a very inspired one at that.

In fact, reordering strengthens the overall impact of Esfahani's flexible, articulate and deeply musical interpretations. Try putting Ligeti's austere, ceremonial *Passacaglia ungherese* before the three-part Ricercar from Bach's *Musical Offering*. Similarly, the rhythmic energy of Byrd's D minor Fantasia easily slips into the jagged disquiet of Ligeti's *Hungarian Rock*, which, in turn, provides a provocative bridge into the C minor Galliard. While many performances of Ligeti's *Continuum* barrel their way through the relentless dissonant *tremolos*, Esfahani's steady rhythm conveys a sense of air between the notes and allows the pitches to register more fully than usual. Also note how Esfahani points up the quirky cross-rhythmic interplay and tart accidentals in Byrd's Fantasia in A minor.

The wild mood contrasts and decorative writing in Byrd's *John come kiss me now*

emerge with more vehemence and inner drama compared to Davitt Moroney's relatively strait-laced recording (Hyperion). And Byrd's *Walsingham* variations are enlivened by Esfahani's animated pacing (he's livelier than Sophie Yates on Chandos and Elizabeth Farr on Naxos), incisive fingerwork and effortless distinction between *legato* and detached phrasings. The full-bodied engineering conveys both instrument and venue in a natural and attractive ambient blend. Highly recommended in whatever running order you choose.

Jed Distler

Vadym Kholodenko

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita No 3, BWV1006^a – Prelude; Gavotte; Gigue **Kreisler** Liebesleid^a. Liebesfreud^a **Medtner** Piano Sonata, 'Night Wind', Op 25 No 2 **Mendelssohn** A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op 61 – Scherzo^a **Rachmaninov** Polka de WR **Schubert** Wohin, D795 No 2^a **Tchaikovsky** Lullaby, Op 16 No 1^a (^atranscr Rachmaninov)

Vadym Kholodenko *pf*
Delos © DE3467 (65' • DDD)



For his first solo disc after winning the Gold Medal at the 14th Van Cliburn International

Piano Competition last year, Vadym Kholodenko sets himself the formidable task of Medtner's *Night Wind* Sonata. It is a notoriously thorny piece to play, a one-movement epic lasting half an hour in two linked sections, and no less difficult for the listener: the first section is an *Allegro* in sonata form but seems almost as meandering as the second (*Allegro molto sfrenatamente* – 'riotously'). Yet its relentless restlessness and teeming profusion of ideas cast a mesmeric spell: a remarkable work, which Medtner dedicated to his friend Rachmaninov.

Kholodenko, born in 1986 and from troubled Kiev, gets inside this turbulent score with technique and stamina to spare, evoking everything from 'galloping gusts and shrieking blasts to soft breezes, with swirling eddies' (the Delos booklet), played with a well-recorded, full-blooded tone. But Marc-André Hamelin, no less sonorous and heartfelt, offers a more refined observation of Medtner's meticulous dynamic and agogic markings, as well as more clearly voicing the often intricate contrapuntal writing. Longer acquaintance with the score and more mature pianism pay their dividends but Kholodenko's is still a fine achievement.

The selection of Rachmaninov transcriptions comes off splendidly. Kholodenko conveys his obvious enjoyment of their sophisticated craftsmanship, revelling in the Godowsky-like treatments of Schubert's 'Wohin?', the Tchaikovsky Lullaby and what is still known as the *Polka de WR* (Delos's track-listing fails to identify it correctly as Behr-Rachmaninov: *Lachtäubchen Polka*). There's a welcome measure, too, of charm and good humour in the two Kreisler paraphrases, and if he cannot compete with the composer's patrician nonchalance, he succeeds well enough on his own terms. We shall be hearing a lot more of Kholodenko.

Jeremy Nicholas

Medtner – selected comparison:
Hamelin (10/98) (HYPE) CDA67221/4

'Geringas Plays Bach Plus'

JS Bach Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-12 **Corigliano** Fancy on a Bach Air – Fragment **Geringas** Sandigloria **Gubaidulina** Ten Preludes – No 3, 'Con sordino – senza sordino' **Krenek** Nachdenklich, Op 184a **Šenderovas** Interludium **Suslin** Schatz-Insel **Traditional** El cant dels Ocells (arr Casals/Geringas) **Vasks** Grāmata čellam – Fragment

David Geringas *vc*
Es-Dur © ES2036 (145' • DDD)



David Geringas is very much of the school of his teacher Rostropovich when it

comes to the Bach Suites: the speeds are very fast, and they have a masculine edge to them that may be more aggressive than some palates can support. But where Rostropovich projects through the phrases, Geringas is more prone to distraction, with the hiatuses of his phrases more often signifying frustrating pauses than lilt that gracefully encourage the music to its conclusion.

Given that the Bach Cello Suites were not performed as a complete set until Pablo Casals presented them as such in 1950, it's unsurprising that one of the challenges inherent in the recording of a complete set is avoiding making them too dry or relentless. One way of managing that, of course, is to intersperse them with other works, and that well-used trick is one that makes this disc a testament to the breadth of Geringas's inquisitiveness. Contemporary music is a particularly effective pairing with Bach, and each of the Suites is interspersed with one of a corresponding eight free-standing pieces

written within Geringas's lifetime. That said, it's not so much a question of the new contextualising the old as of music written without the rules by which Bach operated being among the only music that can stand next to Bach's and hold its head up.

The interwoven pieces here tend to fare better the less they rely on technical devices and aural effect, and as a result the third of Sofia Gubaidulina's 10 Preludes is probably the most complementary of the pieces garlanded round the Bach. It leads perfectly into the D minor Suite, in both tone and harmonic spread. *Fancy on a Bach Air* by John Corigliano – one of the two newest pieces on this disc, alongside Anatolijus Šenderovas's *Interludium* – is similarly effective and is where the listener will hear Geringas's best playing on this disc. These small bagatelles show him at his most energetic and attentive to the minutiae of the music itself, whereas although in the Suites themselves Geringas is extraordinarily precise and clear – despite one or two tiny staggers on Bach's fleet-footed rhythmic corners, of which the Allemande of No 4 is a particular example – he can sound less engaged, sometimes stopping only slightly shy of glib. **Caroline Gill**

'In the Night'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2 **Chopin** Two Nocturnes, Op 27 **Hough** Piano Sonata No 2, 'Notturmo luminoso' **Schumann** Carnaval, Op 9. Fantasiestücke, Op 12 – In der Nacht
Stephen Hough *pf*
Hyperion © CDA67996 (77' • DDD)



A new disc from Stephen Hough is always welcome. How will he surprise us this time and where will he take us? The answer is into the night – but not gentle or with a mug of cocoa.

There's the dark and turbulent eponymous tone-poem and the far-from-restful *presto* finale of the *Moonlight*, given additional agitation by Hough's spiky left-hand off-beats. The two adroitly chosen Nocturnes show that Chopin's nocturnal reveries could be as dark and threatening in their own way as Hough's, if his Sonata *Notturmo luminoso* is anything to go by. Angular, dissonant, fiery and often bleak, this work (18'23" in length) suggests, among its many images, 'the irrational fears or the disturbing dreams which are only darkened by the harsh glare of a suspended,



On the road: Shani Diluka offers a varied journey through American classics from Barber to Jarrett

dusty light bulb' (the composer's useful route map in a note appended to Harriet Smith's thoughtful booklet). Finally we have the night-time revels of a masked ball. The opening of *Carnaval* is strangely perfunctory (it's marked *quasi maestoso*) but this is, for the most part, a performance enlivened by the touch of a master pianist: the tied D at the end of 'Pantalon et Columbine' (how does he do that?) and the *ppp* final bar of 'Paganini' are two telling instances.

One problem I have with this disc is with the sound. Is it the generous acoustic of the Wyastone Concert Hall or the microphone placement therein that makes the piano seem unfocused, with more definition in the treble and bass than in the middle of the range? Whatever, it's certainly not the classic Hyperion sound.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Road 66'

Adams China Gates **Barber** Souvenirs, Op 28 - Pas de deux **Beach** Young Birches **Bernstein** For Felicia Montealegre. Interlude. For Aaron Copland **Cage** In a Landscape **Copland** Piano Blues No 1 for Leo Smit **AK Evans** Waltz for Debby **B Evans** The Peace Piece **Gershwin** Love walked in (arr Grainger) **Ginastera** Danzas argentinas - Danza de la moza donosa **Glass**

Etude No 9 **Hyung-ki Joo** Chandeliers **Jarrett** My Wild Irish Rose. I Love Porgy (after Gershwin) **Porter** What is this thing called love (arr Merlin)² **Shani Diluka** pf with **Natalie Dessay** sop Mirare © MIR239 (70' • DDD)



Before discussing the music at hand, we need to address two incongruities. One:

Shani Diluka calls her recital of 18 pieces by composers and improvisers of the Americas 'Road 66', yet the iconic highway of song and legend is actually Route 66. Two: in her booklet-notes, Diluka links each piece with a passage from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, even though the gentleness that prevails throughout the majority of selections hardly evokes the novel's gritty narrative.

Diluka brings appreciable nuance and delicacy to Adams's *China Gates* and Beach's *Young Birches*, and infuses the churning minimalist patterns of Glass's Etude No 9 with more dynamic and colouristic range than one often hears from so-called contemporary music specialists. In most lyrical pieces, however, softer dynamics often recede and wilt to

the point of fading away, especially when Diluka makes *diminuendos*. You hear this in the two Bernstein *Anniversaries*, Ginastera's 'Danza de la moza donosa' and Grainger's gorgeous transcription of Gershwin's 'Love walked in'. Her spineless performance of Copland's *Piano Blues* No 1 lacks the sinew and projection heard from Leo Smit, the work's dedicatee, although such a style befits Hyung-ki Joo's noodly, shapeless *Chandeliers*.

However, Diluka's faster-than-usual tempo for Cage's *In a Landscape* rescues this music from its usual frozen dream state. Her enervated, flaccid approach to Keith Jarrett and Bill Evans is alien to these jazz icons in both spirit and letter; in fact she misreads *Waltz for Debby*'s fourth-to-last chord. But Diluka plays the piano part to Raphaël Merlin's brilliant, harmonically imaginative arrangement of Cole Porter's 'What is this thing called love' gorgeously, abetted by special guest Natalie Dessay's sultry singing. Had the two paired up for an entire CD's worth of Merlin-arranged standards, I would have stayed up all night behind the wheel to listen, rather than squirming in the back seat to the tune of 'Are we there yet? Are we there yet?'

Jed Distler

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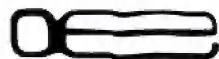
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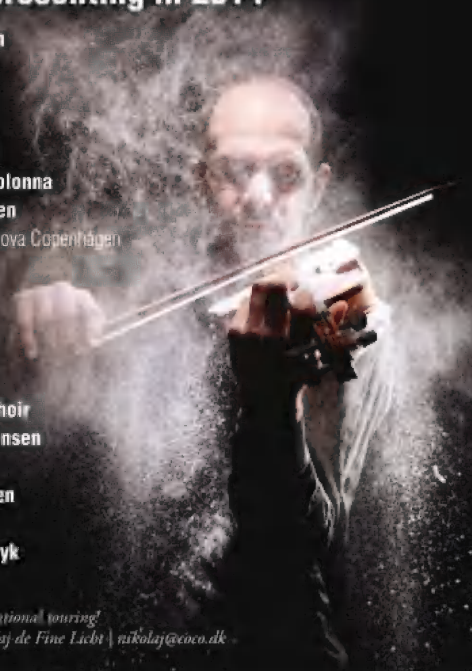
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GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

SCARLATTI SPLINTERS

Jed Distler listens to three wholly different approaches to Domenico Scarlatti's endlessly inventive keyboard sonatas



Scarlati, and glancing elsewhere: David Greilsammer juxtaposes music separated by three centuries

David Greilsammer's previous Sony releases pitted old and new pieces against each other in surprisingly effective programmes. Here the pianist offers a similar game plan as he goes back and forth between Scarlatti sonatas and individual movements from John Cage's Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano. As it happens, the juxtapositions make musical sense from a perspective of tonal relationships, and genuinely flow from one selection to the next. Greilsammer's sedate, introspective unfolding of Scarlatti's Kk213 D minor Sonata assiduously dovetails into the gentle arpeggios and repeated notes in Cage's *Gemini* Sonatas XIV and XV. In turn, Cage's staggered and asymmetrical repeated notes provide the perfect lead-in to Scarlatti's Kk141 in D minor, with its machine gun-like repeated notes, although Greilsammer's punchy left-hand chords ultimately claim our attention. Cage's lyrical, E minor-ish Sonata XIII makes an interesting bookend to the familiar E major, Kk531. You get the drift. That said, one wonders if the overall programme concept governs Greilsammer's tempo choices. Would he normally take the *Allegro* directive of the B minor, Kk27, at a leisurely *andante* or play the first Cage Sonata in a glacial, monumental manner that markedly differs from the faster, lighter norm? Or treat the typically upbeat E major, Kk381, like a lament? For whatever reason, Greilsammer saves

his best Scarlatti interpretation for the final selection, an incisive and splendidly articulated account of the D major, Kk492. And while the Cage pieces certainly hold interest individually, the entire Sonatas and Interludes make a deeper impact when performed as an integral, unified cycle.

Unlike pianos or harpsichords, accordions are able to make *crescendos* and *diminuendos* on a single note or chord. The trick is to deploy this advantage tastefully. When accordionist **Jänne Rattya** does so, he manages to breathe refreshing new life and character into the Kk203 E minor's short trills and the Kk13 G major's clipped phrases and short repeated-note phrases. He uses dynamic swells to help clarify counterpoint and propel long melodies over the bar-lines in the Kk19 F minor, although the same devices sound relatively mannered and draw attention to themselves rather than the music in the Kk126 C minor. They prove more annoying in the Kk159 C major, together with tempo modifications that are less expressive than they are prissy. But the rapid triple-metre Kk519 in F minor generates rhythmic excitement and dramatic tension through a steady pace and dynamic understatement. And Rattya's *crescendos* on long sustained notes provide a heated contrast to the quick downwards-cascading arpeggios in another F minor masterpiece, the Kk386 Sonata. In short, not every selection will suit all Scarlatti fans' tastes, yet Rattya's

sophisticated mastery and total control over his instrument's keys, buttons and bellows will surely give mere mortal accordionists pause.

As with his previous Decca recordings of Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* and the Beethoven/Liszt Ninth Symphony, **Maurizio Baglini's** selection of 16 Scarlatti sonatas is compulsively detailed. You hear this from the start in the C major, Kk515, whose dynamic shadings, clipped notes and slightly picky breath pauses tend to throw the pulse off kilter. Ditto vis-à-vis the linear interplay and uneven trills of the A minor, Kk383, although these gestures are better controlled in the E flat, Kk371. Baglini's generally crisp delivery in the C major, Kk460, is offset by small instances of rushing. He tinkers around at the start of the F sharp, Kk319, while Vladimir Horowitz conveys colouristic points within a steady tempo that enables the subsequent right-hand fireworks to make a dazzling impact. By contrast, Baglini slows down to accommodate the notes, and the virtuoso effect falls flat. On the other hand, the nifty *tenutos*, poked-out bass notes, contrived dynamics and other such pianistic tricks in the celebrated E major, Kk380, better hold your attention because they are technically under control and calibrated with the utmost specificity, and taste be damned. In lyrical sonatas such as the B flat Kk439, F minor Kk466 and D minor Kk90, Baglini's combination of slow tempi and observing repeats yields unusually long playing times. Yet within the curvy phrasing, lavish pedalling and nuanced Romanticism, Baglini finds his artistic centre. Here his music-making teams with proportioned give and take, plus a fluidity and a wholeness that Baglini does not always achieve elsewhere. The authority and finesse distinguishing Pogorelich and Pletnev are preferable for those who like quirky, intensely individual Scarlatti pianism. Decca's engineering captures Baglini's softer playing beautifully but louder passages often are over-modulated, strident and unattractively monochrome. **G**

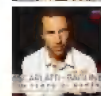
THE RECORDINGS



Cage, D Scarlatti Kybd Sonatas
David Greilsammer
Sony Classical © 88883 76240-2



D Scarlatti Sons (arr for accordion)
Jänne Rattya
Ondine © ODE1232-2



D Scarlatti Kybd Sons
Maurizio Baglini
Decca © 481 0797DH

Graham Fitkin

Pwyll ap Siôn profiles an artist whose inherent modesty belies his position as an essential composer of our time

In an especially revealing interview with Liz Haddon in 2006, when asked where he saw himself within the British contemporary music scene, Fitkin answered by saying, 'I don't feel that I belong at all, actually...I don't feel part of it and therefore I can't comment on it any further than that, really!'

Fitkin's candid response may seem surprising to many as he is often regarded as the archetypal composer of today. A performer, conductor, publisher and educator, Fitkin places himself at the centre of all stages of the music-making process. His music also evokes the spirit of its age – one that has roots in minimalism, jazz and pop but has managed very effectively to transplant these influences into the classical sphere. For some, this heady mix of the frantic and reflective is the very quintessence of the postmodern world we live in: frenetic, freewheeling passages give way to calm, serene moments in abrupt and giddy juxtapositions that reflect the detached and often discontinuous disruptions in our day-to-day lives. Often characterised by an eclectic range of high and low styles that jostle for position in a rhythmically supercharged and energised sound world, Fitkin's music embodies this zeitgeist.

'His music absorbs and transforms the multifarious sonic signifiers that float around into self-contained shapes'

Fitkin was born in west Cornwall in 1963. Studies with Peter Nelson and Nigel Osborne at the University of Nottingham in the early 1980s encouraged him from a comparatively young age to develop his own individual voice, albeit one crafted from a thorough knowledge and understanding of European high modernism, as heard in the early, experimental *Ostrich on the Plain* (1985) for oboe and percussion. Fitkin's music may not sound especially modernist – indeed, for Keith Potter his is an 'essentially classical' aesthetic – yet it does pay due deference to modernism's rigour and formalism. Rigour of a determinedly direct and not to say unremitting variety would have greeted the composer upon his arrival at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague in 1984 to study with minimalist master Louis Andriessen, yet by this time Fitkin's own language was more or less fully formed, and – barring a few excursions down occasionally unlikely pathways – has remained true to its eclectic origins.

Broadly speaking, Fitkin's musical development may be described as prism-like, starting in the mid- to late-1980s with a series of works that explored the piano's uniform texture and 'black-and-white' construction before utilising typically block-like combinations of opposing sound structures in the ensemble works of the early- to mid-1990s. Then, via a stream of important orchestral commissions

FITKIN FACTS

Born Crows-an-Wra, west Cornwall, April 19, 1963

Education University of Nottingham (1981-84), Royal Conservatoire in The Hague (1984-87)

Teachers Peter Nelson, Nigel Osborne, Louis Andriessen

Breakthrough work *Flak* (1989) for two pianos/eight hands

Definitive work *Circuit* (2002) for two pianos and orchestra

during the mid- to late-1990s, Fitkin adopted a more fluid, variegated and integrated approach to colour and texture, which is also found in the more recent 'mixed media' works, many composed in collaboration with his partner, harpist and composer Ruth Wall – such as the dark ambient electronica of 'Kaplan' (2003) or the folk-infused dance beats on 'Still Warm' (2006-7).

In truth, however, these distinctions are far less clear-cut than the above description suggests, and there are times when Fitkin shifts effortlessly between them. The early works for piano serve as a useful illustration. Compositions written for two pianos/eight hands for his group Nanquidno, such as *Sciosophy* (1986), *There Is a Great Weight on My Head Tonight* (1986) and *Flak* (1989), or the trilogy of pieces for six-piano group Piano Circus – *Loud* (1989), *Log* (1990) and *Line* (1991) – variously demonstrate the composer's penchant for assertive, rhythmically charged openings, bold, direct harmonies, transparent textures and distinctive melodic lines that suddenly burst into rapid, sweeping figurations before breaking down into harmonically ambiguous, jazz- or pop-inflected passages.

Flak is probably the most indicative example, with an uplifting opening theme and quasi-chorale sequence stated unequivocally in C major which gradually builds, by way of a mosaic-like series of interlocking passages, in rhythmic, dynamic and textural intensity towards a rapturous conclusion. Fitkin's use of proportional formulas and mathematical





Graham Fitkin: his music reflects our day-to-day lives

systems also brings a sense of underlying order to these polystylistic surfaces, and it is perhaps unsurprising that his music has attracted the interest of dance (and, more recently, opera) companies, including Shobana Jeyasingh, New York City Ballet and San Francisco Ballet, and resulted in him winning the International Grand Prix Music for Dance Video Award in 1994.

Around the same time as the virtuoso multi-piano compositions, Fitkin was also writing solo piano pieces of a more pared-down nature – occasionally resembling the piano miniatures of Satie, Howard Skempton or his near-contemporary and friend Laurence Crane. And one of Fitkin's earliest works, *From Yellow to Yellow* (1985), with its gradually evolving Pärt-like opening consisting of a repeated six-note pattern, suggests that the 'introverted' Fitkin came first.

The ensemble pieces from the early 1990s (many of which are included on two discs released on the Argo label in 1992 and 1993) apply the principle of contrasting materials to

opposing blocks of sound, resulting in more dramatic structures that are allowed to unfold over longer periods. Examples include *Slow* (1990) for two keyboards and string quartet, which places an emphasis on sustained lines and chords, or the animated pop-minimalism of *Mesh* (1992), composed for Icebreaker's amplified keyboards-and-wind combination.

Hard Fairy (1994) for soprano saxophone and two pianos manages effectively to combine the visceral and lyrical strains of Fitkin's style. Inevitably, perhaps, the next step was to apply such principles to the broader canvas of orchestral music, much of which was composed between 1994 and 1996 when Fitkin was resident composer with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Works such as *Henry* and *Metal* (both 1995) also signal something of a departure in their use of quotation for the first time – playfully in the latter's pop-art evocation of early 1990s Eurodance rhythms; more seriously in the guise of a fitting homage to Purcell in the former, to mark the tercentenary of his death.

Many of these ingredients come into play in the recent concerto commissions such as *Circuit* (2002) for two pianos and orchestra, and a cello concerto for Yo-Yo Ma for the BBC Proms in 2011. *Circuit* is one of Fitkin's most impressive works, and has been described by Crane as 'gloriously exploiting both [the piano's] percussive and...lyrical sides and revelling in the freedom that the medium of two solos and large orchestra gives him'. The cello concerto is more introspective, beginning with a single sustained note on the cello, and may represent the sense of isolation from the contemporary music scene remarked upon by Fitkin above. Yet there is little doubt that Fitkin's music constitutes an essential part of this music scene. By dint of creative osmosis, his music successfully manages to absorb and transform the multifarious sonic signifiers that float around into autonomous, self-contained shapes and that exude a very clear sense of their own identity and gravitational pull.

He is every part the composer of today. ⑥

The premiere of Fitkin's 'Distil' is performed by the Smith Quartet and percussionist Joby Burgess at the Cheltenham Music Festival on July 4; visit cheltenhamfestivals.com

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

A broad selection of Fitkin's works for a variety of forces

The British Music Collection



Various artists

Decca ⑤ ② ➔ 473 434-2

An authoritative survey of Fitkin's early works for solo piano, multiple pianos and ensembles, including performances by Piano Circus, Ensemble Bash, Icebreaker and the John Harle Band, originally released on the Argo label between 1992 and 1994.



Circuit

Noriko Ogawa, Kathryn Stott pfs Tokyo SO / Naoto Otomo BIS ⑤ ② BIS-SACD1517 (8/10)

In addition to the excellent *Circuit* for two pianos and orchestra in a high-quality recording featuring Kathryn Stott and Noriko Ogawa, there are a number of interesting solo and two-piano pieces that span almost 20 years.

Vocal



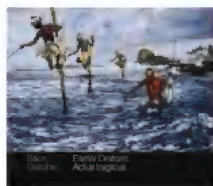
Geoffrey Norris listens to all of Poulenc's songs from Canada:
'This set emphasises that it was the interweaving of voice and verse that he found the most fertile medium' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



Fabrice Fitch discovers the music of Gottfried August Homilius:
'I was continually impressed at the range of techniques and expression, at times impeccably up-to-date' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**

JS Bach

Easter Oratorio, BWV249. Cantata No 106, Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, 'Actus tragicus'
Hannah Morrison *sop* **Meg Bragle** *mez* **Nicholas Mulroy** *ten* **Peter Harvey** *bass* **Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists / John Eliot Gardiner**
Soli Deo Gloria © SDG719 (60' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live at Cadogan Hall, London, June 24-26, 2013



Quibbling with the completeness of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Cantata

Pilgrimage is a touch academic, as almost all the sacred cantatas were performed in that breathtaking achievement over the course of 2000. If logistics conspired then against an *oeuvre intégrale*, SDG is gradually filling the empty spaces, initially with a fine disc of Ascension cantatas (7/13) and now with a refashioned *Actus tragicus* (after the previous DG Archiv release – 5/91, 7/00 – which was not part of the Pilgrimage) and a Bach debut for Gardiner, the *Easter Oratorio*.

The *Actus tragicus* sits on that captivating cusp of two worlds: Bach the inheritor of the richly theological and devotional 17th-century 'vocal concerto' and Bach the young 22-year-old, modernising, refining and – even within these intricate funereal strains – strutting his stuff. Such is also the case with Gardiner and his trusty colleagues, who collectively push back from the idea that *ars moriendi* (the art of dying as a much-loved Lutheran conceit of fear and consolation) needs be world-weary and soporific. Some may find the opening chorus, initially at least, too fleet of foot and chipper but this soon transforms into a performance with a telling theatrical and atmospheric 'thread' – graphically reflected in the splendid recorder-playing of Rachel Beckett.

The *coro ed arioso* 'Es ist der alte Bund' has often been the downfall of the director and ensemble who fail to recognise the dramatic pacing and 'tilt' in the music as

we move almost imperceptibly from despair to reconciliation. Gardiner toys delectably with Bach's meticulously textured dissonances; the soft hue of recorders and gambas presents an other-world of irradiating mercurial elusiveness, whose sound perspective here is skilfully engineered. It all leads to eventual roudades of faith-inspired hope, perhaps a touch over-exaggerated in diction; but this is, as you expect with Gardiner, a performance of supreme devotion and attention to detail.

The *Easter Oratorio* could not provide a greater contrast. After the knotty rhetoric of BWV106, this work – presented here in its final manifestation during Bach's last few years – shines forth without many long shadows. There is the customary razzle and dazzle from the virtuoso Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists, though it's the oboe solo in the *Adagio* which, in the opening triptych, lifts the music from the page most persuasively. The arias, even without universally distinguished performances, contribute to an overall shape which compels one to regard this piece as rather more than a pragmatic patchwork quilt. Gardiner is clearly convinced of its merits and therefore you'll find no greater advocate. Now all we need are the occasional sacred cantatas Nos 29, 119, 120, 157, 195, 196 and 197 to complete this mighty project.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JS Bach

'Cantatas for the Complete Liturgical Year, Vol 18' Cantatas – No 9, Es ist das Heil uns kommen her; No 70, Wachet! betet! betet! wachet!; No 182, Himmelskönig, sei willkommen
Gerlinde Sämman *sop* **Petra Noskaiová** *contr*
Christoph Genz *ten* **Jan Van der Crabben** *bass*
La Petite Bande / Sigiswald Kuijken
Accent © ACC25318 (70' • DDD • T/t)



For this latest instalment in his personal selection of Bach cantatas – one

for each Sunday and liturgical feast – Sigiswald Kuijken alights on three works spanning two decades. Earliest is the Weimar Palm Sunday cantata, No 182, contrasting choral movements of dancing exuberance with meditative or agitated arias. No 70 also originated in the Weimar years, though it survives only in the expanded version Bach made in Leipzig. The opening chorus is the composer in rollicking *Brandenburg* mode, while the Last Judgement provokes some of his most graphically operatic writing. The latest of the three, No 9, offsets an anguished tenor aria with a delicious canonic duet for soprano and alto: one of those Bachian movements that miraculously combine polyphonic intricacy with airy, mellifluous grace.

Kuijken's now-familiar one-to-a-part approach pays dividends in the dancing lightness of texture and refined, chamber-musical interplay between voices and instruments. Flute and oboe d'amore frolic delectably in the opening chorus and the duet of No 9, while Kuijken himself contributes eloquently phrased and coloured obbligatos on the violin and (in No 70's baleful alto aria) the violoncello da spalla, the light-toned 'shoulder cello' which Bach himself may have used.

As with previous issues in the series, provisos centre on Kuijken's choice of vocal soloists. Topped by the flutey soprano of Gerlinde Sämman, the solo quartet combine well in ensemble – though the voices can be outgunned by the very closely miked instruments. But in the arias I often craved more colour, more distinctive personality. Jan Van der Crabben's gentle bass is touching in the hymn-like slow aria of No 70 but sounds too mild-mannered in the apocalyptic recitatives. Christoph Genz's clean, 'instrumental' tenor tightens on higher notes, while Petra Noskaiová seems oddly cast in music that requires a strong lower register. A disc of mixed pleasures, then, valuable above all for the expressive contributions of Kuijken and his fellow instrumentalists.

Richard Wigmore

JS Bach

'L'Epiphanie'

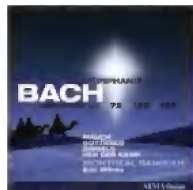
Cantatas – No 72, Alles nur nach Gottes Willen; No 81, Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen?; No 155, Mein Gott, wie lang, ach lange; No 156, Ich steh mit einem Fuss im Grabe

Monika Mauch *sop* Franziska Gottwald *contr*

Charles Daniels *ten* Harry van der Kamp *bass*

Montreal Baroque / Eric Milnes

ATMA Classique © ACD2 2404 (57' • DDD • T/t)



Except for the exquisite Sinfonia that opens No 156, none of these

Epiphany cantatas is familiar fare. But with Bach cantatas, lesser-known rarely means inferior. No 72 opens with one of Bach's infectiously joyous triple-time choruses, while No 81, in which Jesus calms the wind and the waves, is in effect an unstaged sacred opera, complete with a pair of graphic 'storm' arias. The highlight of the relatively brief No 155 is the imploring duet for alto and tenor accompanied by a virtuoso bassoon obbligato.

Five volumes into his projected complete cantata cycle, Eric Milnes gets animated, stylistically assured playing from his Montreal band, based on a maximum of 10 strings. I didn't care for the little rhythmic hesitations that disrupt the flow of the soprano's polonaise aria in No 72. But in the main Milnes has a sure feel for tempo and Bachian rhetoric. Like Kuijken in his selective series for Accent, he favours a one-to-a-part approach in the choruses and chorales. With the soloists well balanced and lively in their contrapuntal interplay, No 72's opening chorus is one of the disc's prime pleasures.

As so often on Bach cantata recordings, the individual solo contributions are more variable. I enjoyed Monika Mauch's fresh, bell-like tones (delightful in her lilting aria in No 155) and Franziska Gottwald's warm if slightly fluttery mezzo. Tenor Charles Daniels, always a fine Baroque stylist, performs wonders of agility in his furious aria in No 81, though his distinctive reedy timbre will not be to everyone's taste. Harry van der Kamp, likewise a seasoned Baroque specialist, makes more of his words than his colleagues. But to my ears his tone now sounds disagreeably parched. I'm glad to have heard this disc. But in each cantata the performances directed by Suzuki (BIS, 1/98, 7/03, 7/09, 12/11) and Gardiner (DG, 9/00; SDG, 9/06), in their complete cycles, offer more consistent solo singing and a more urgent engagement with the text. **Richard Wigmore**

JS Bach

'Lutheran Masses, Vol 2'

Masses – BWV234; BWV236. Cantata No 79, Gott der Herr ist Sonn' und Schild

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro © COR16120 (74' • DDD • T/t)



One of the most durable virtues of Harry Christophers and The Sixteen is

the unfussy fluency of their musical endeavour – and the expressive transparency they bring to repertoire where they feel especially at home. Unlike Handel, Bach is hardly daily bread for them and yet their performance of two 'parody' Masses (for which we have almost all the original cantata material) conveys an extraordinarily easy and uncluttered approach, if one which, rhetorically, stands aloof from some of the more intensely coloured and urgent readings from recent continental ensembles.

The Sixteen could not be better suited to the genial abstraction of the sunny Mass in G major, BWV236. How organically and devotionally Christophers shapes the *stile antico* of the opening *Kyrie*; there's also something profoundly patient and measured about the way he embraces Bach's mature contrapuntal fabric in the opening 'Gloria'. Indeed, with such a spacious outlook, Eamonn Dougan delivers a nobly conceived 'Gratias agimus' (underscored lovingly by David Miller's theorbo realisations), allowing us to rejoice in Bach's unfailingly effervescent setting of these words, with equally open-hearted contributions from the other fine soloists.

Christophers's inclusion of Cantata No 79 is an agreeable reminder of Bach's deft transformational skills, in the adaptation of two movements from this 1725 Reformation cantata to the later G major Mass. Yet it is the A major Mass, BWV234, which gives the most unexpected pleasure. This is a work that has divided the critics over 150 years of Bach scholarship as to whether the dramatic nature of the material – in the case of Cantata No 67, the source for the 'Gloria', a true *Vox Christi* prevailing over the devil with the power of peace – can be successfully transformed into the relatively abstract imagery of the Ordinary of the Mass. The Sixteen's answer is to bring a direct, almost seamless objectivity to the Latin text but furnished with a compelling warmth and soft-grained delight in a distinctive harmonic and textural landscape still woefully under-appreciated by Bach

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Bach's Easter Oratorio

Three recordings that came before John Eliot Gardiner's – and how Gramophone rated them



NOVEMBER 1952

JS Bach Easter Oratorio

Soloists; Akademie Chorus;

Vienna Chamber Orchestra /

Felix Prohaska

Nixa • BLP307 (12in • 39s 6d)

The sense of haste is expressed vividly in the quick opening section, in which trumpets and oboes play a prominent part. The recording reproduces these very well and also the remarkable bubbling bassoon part, the whole section having a delightful springy rhythm and an excellent balance. It is a pity that the moment the soloists (Peter and John) enter, the orchestra retires into the distance, giving the effect of two unrelated planes of sound: the balance with the chorus is also not good. In spite of imperfections, I much enjoyed this disc.

Alec Robertson



APRIL 1964

JS Bach Easter Oratorio

Soloists; Temple University

Concert Choir; Philadelphia

Orchestra / Eugene Ormandy

CBS • SBRG72163 (12in • 32s 3d)

The gem of the cantata is the exquisite tenor aria 'Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer', with a lulling accompaniment for muted violins, two recorders doubling them, and continuo. It is spoilt by too quick a tempo, the over-loud recorder-playing and an unease in the singing strange in so distinguished an artist as Richard Lewis. Maureen Forrester in her aria expresses well the longing of Mary Magdalene to see her Saviour but her enunciation lacks precision.

Alec Robertson



OCTOBER 1994

JS Bach Easter Oratorio

Soloists; Choir and Orchestra

of the Age of Enlightenment /

Gustav Leonhardt

Philips © 442 119-2PH (73' • DDD)

The *Easter Oratorio* carries a unique flavour, with which Leonhardt clearly feels a close affinity. This is evident in the way he handles the exuberant Sinfonia with knowing and stately bravura, gently nudging the dance-inspired metre with subtle accentuation, also providing copious insights into the phrasing of the wonderful wind dialogues. Leonhardt's perceptive performances will always win friends and his recording of the *Easter Oratorio* still appeals more than its competitors.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

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GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

DOWLAND REFRACTED

Philip Clark listens to four discs that reimagine the despair-tinged songs of John Dowland through the prism of later musical styles



Paul Hillier and friends record Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's 'crumbling power minimalism' in Copenhagen

John Dowland was a dreamer of anagogic dreams, a composer who inhabited an ancient world so far removed from our own that he will remain an eternal enigma. And yet Dowland songs like 'Flow my tears' and 'Come again' feel strikingly of the moment, their tonalities – too modal to be truly tonal and too tonal to be convincingly modal – touching on fundamental and enduring truths. Dowland was truly a Renaissance man. In *Gramophone's* April 2012 issue Harrison Birtwistle told me that Dowland's music felt like something dormant waiting to be reawakened, an authentic vein of English expression that had nothing to do, thankfully, with goal-orientated Romanticism or the harmony likely to emerge from manipulating 12-tone rows. 'There's a lyrical expression in Dowland that isn't like anything else in music,' he said, words that resonated through my mind as I listened to *Despairs had governed me too long* by the Swedish ensemble **Skogen**.

Skogen is led by Magnus Granberg, who provides compositional frameworks for his 10 musicians while preferring to sink his own identity within that of his group. With Skogen, Granberg's original idea was, he says, 'to create a space where there's room for many different ways of working and existing as a musician and a human being, and on the other hand to try to integrate these ways of working'. And integration is key. Skogen's debut album, released in

2012, 'Ist gefallen in den Schnee', derived its harmonic and rhythmic fabric from Schubert's *Winterreise* and Granberg described how, in his role as 'composer', he provided his hybrid ensemble of new-music players, improvisers and electronic musicians with a 'pool' of material – pitches, rhythms, chords, fragments of melodies – and a regulating temporal structure upon which to hang them.

In this new Dowland-related piece the process is more opaque: we're not even told which Dowland song Granberg has plundered. Improvising violinist Angharad Davies sits next to 'classical' violinist Anna Lindal; the pitch-specific contributions of John Eriksson on vibraphone and marimba coexist with the textural explorations of Henrik Olsson (bowls, glasses) and Petter Wästberg (objects, contact microphones). Ko Ishikawa plays the traditional Japanese shô as his compatriot Toshimaru Nakamura performs on a no-input mixing board, a gizmo that wires input through output to generate feedback loops ripe for sonic manoeuvres. Granberg's achievement is immense. Drawing on this 17th-century source, *au courant* art cuts across allegiances of style while the spectre of John Dowland is never too far from the surface.

Following Skogen, 'Mixed Company' by Danish composer **Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen** feels like a retreat into how new music used to sound. For a sequence of works inspired by Dowland's 'Flow my tears', the leering cartoon violence

of the first piece, *Run* (2012), makes for an incongruous opener. What Granberg achieves through supple inference – the Beckettian paradox of a composer being strongly present through his absence – Holmgreen makes explicit. Dowland's melodic chi is writ large and moulded into a nervy, crumbling power minimalism with a high-hat mapping out the rhythmic pulse fields around which trombone, bass clarinet and violin drift, slip and recover.

The London Sinfonietta clearly enjoy themselves, though, in *Play* (2010, rev 2012), which again deals in high-speed interruptions of high-speed material relentlessly on the high-speed move. Paul Hillier leads the Sinfonietta and his own Theatre of Voices in *Turn II* for four voices with flute, harp, guitar and percussion (2012), and it's now that Holmgreen's Dowland redux snaps into focus. The four voices enter in turn and Dowland's line is gradually pieced together, although the whole is kept strategically out of reach. Three pieces for the voices alone lead to *Company* (2010), which unites voices and instruments but is undermined by Holmgreen's dogged determination to engineer a grand sign-off.

But consider this: are Granberg and Holmgreen both guilty of projecting on to Dowland a 21st-century notion of 'art music'? 'A Game of Mirrors' by French jazz guitarist and improviser **David Chevallier** and 'Shadows', which features the Cologne-based vocalist **Sarah Maria Sun**, both deal with the basics of Dowland's song forms with varying shades of success. 'Flow my tears' heard on Sun's record is tinged with clumsy sentiment, Jochen Feucht's velvety saxophone feeling out of place. But Chevallier's record is an enjoyable listen, soprano Anne Magouët evoking an appropriate sense of time and place as the harmonies are nudged jazzwards. A difficult conundrum; but they swing it. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Granberg *Despairs had governed me too long* **Skogen**
Another Timbre (AT) 71



Gudmundsen-Holmgreen
'Mixed Company' **Hillier**
Dacapo (D) 8 226114



Dowland 'A Game of Mirrors'
Chevallier, Magouët, Helstroffer
Carpe Diem (C) CD16302



Dowland 'Shadows'
Sun, Feucht, Wuttke, Matzke
Profil (P) PHI4011

lovers. There are more refined and exquisite performances – of which Raphaël Pichon and Pygmalion is currently the most irresistible – but there are few as unassuming and natural as this. Strongly recommended. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

Muses – selected comparison:

Ens Pygmalion, Pichon (3/14) (ALPH) ALPH4816

Caldara

Requiem. Trio Sonata, Op 1 No 5.

Cello Sonata No 15. Missa dolorosa - Sanctus; Benedictus; Agnus Dei

Musica Fiorita / Daniela Dolci org/hpd

Pan Classics © PCI0296 (65' • DDD • T/T)



A hitherto little-known manuscript now in the Czech National Library contains a *Missa defunctorum* by Caldara that comprises the first three sections of the Requiem liturgy (the Introit, *Kyrie* and Sequence). Nothing is known about the origins of the music or how it ended up in Prague, but it probably dates from the Venetian's long years of service at the Habsburg court in Vienna (and it is known that he deputised for his boss Fux at the coronation of Emperor Charles VI in Prague in 1723).

To replace the missing liturgical texts, Musica Fiorita perform the *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* from Caldara's *Missa dolorosa* (1735), and proceedings are further fleshed out by two chamber sonatas. I am unsure if Caldara's scores stipulate the liberal seasoning of harp and psaltery sprinkled copiously here by Musica Fiorita's continuo group; their sound is indeed 'flowery' during a trio sonata published in 1693, although the string players offer a lush sonority in an exceptionally beautiful *Adagio*. Organist Daniela Dolci supervises a gorgeously sincere performance of the *Missa defunctorum*: the continuo group hamper naturalistic rhetoric by gilding the lily in the bass aria 'Oro supplex et acclinis' but there are lots of ear-catching moments, such as the controlled *staccato* thrusts from the orchestra in the 'Dies irae', declamatory trumpets reserved exclusively for the alto aria 'Tuba mirum', and the dozen-strong choir's pious shaping of Caldara's counterpoint in the Sequence's exquisite climax, 'Pie Jesu Domine dona eis requiem'. **David Vickers**

Dyrd

Out of Darkness

Nidaros Cathedral Choir / Vivianne Sydnæs

2L (F) (2) (3) (4) (5) 2L099SABD

(55' • DDD/DSD/DXD). Blu-ray: DTS-HD MA 192kHz/24-bit 5.1 & LPCM 192kHz/24-bit stereo



Håkon Gullvåg's startlingly macabre cover work (*The Resurrection*) provides a

powerful indication that the music will be innovative and strong, as – indeed – it is. The Norwegian composer Torbjørn Dyrud's training as an organist and choirmaster has been consolidated in recent years, following the release of his 2008 solo piano CD 'Quietly to the Fields' and an organ improvisations disc, 'Albaster Box Liturgy'. This new (2012) landmark 55-minute choral work condenses Christ's story into seven scenes (preceded by part of John's Gospel), with the singers moving to a different position within the performing 'space' for each section. *Out of Darkness* is not a conventional Passion since it also carries the listener beyond the grave, through the Resurrection, ending memorably by the Sea of Tiberias, in an ecstatically simple coda, full of the gospel of grace and forgiveness.

This piece was one of the last projects commissioned by Vivianne Sydnæs during her 10-year tenure at Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim. Her mixed cathedral choir of 40 voices is accompanied by a pair of trumpets and a busy percussionist. The marimba provides a quasi continuo, while a whip illustrates Christ being flogged, and side drum and cymbal rolls and scrapes reinforce the rising clamour for crucifixion. In addition, the choir employs a wide variety of cinematic 'extended vocal techniques', such as whistling, humming, chanting and groaning. Although all of the above is delivered in an exemplary manner, it only makes full sense with the contribution of Sarah Head, who delivers the narration with a pitch-perfect intimacy.

For audiophiles, this DXD 24-bit Pure Audio Blu-ray recording is also an important release, having been sculpted in six-channel surround sound by its producer and balance engineer, Morten Lindberg. Even in the comparatively 'flat' sound field offered by two-channel stereo, this is a compelling and unbearably affecting work. Strongly recommended. **Malcolm Riley**

Fauré • Ravel

Fauré *La bonne chanson*, Op 61. Clair de lune, Op 46 No 2. Spleen, Op 51 No 3. Cinq Mélodies, Op 58 – No 1, Mandoline; No 2, En sourdine; No 3, Green; No 5, C'est l'extase langoureuse
Ravel *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*.

Chansons madécasses, Op 78

Barbara Hendricks *sop* **Love Derwinger** *pf*
Swedish Chamber Ensemble

Arte Verum © ARV012 (66' • DDD • T/T)

'The Good Song'

Debussy *Fêtes galantes* **Fauré** *La bonne*

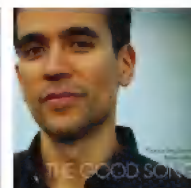
chanson, Op 61 **Poulenc** *Le bestiaire*.

Chansons gaillardes **Ravel** *Deux*

Epigrammes de Clément Marot

Thomas MeglIORANZA *bar* **Reiko Uchida** *pf*

Thomas MeglIORANZA/CD Baby © 888174 376271 (55' • DDD)



These two artist-produced French song recitals illustrate the pluses and minuses of artistic control. Now in her mid-60s, Barbara Hendricks is at something close to her best in the 2009 performances with the Swedish Chamber Ensemble. Unfortunately, that repertoire is preceded by 2011 recordings in which her vibrato seems to have lost its core and her general manner is a rather more careful in miscellaneous Fauré songs that don't seem so close to her heart. Even though *La bonne chanson* in the version using string quartet and piano has Hendricks in good voice (apparently recorded in 2009), her interpretative fantasy doesn't truly kick in until the Ravel Mallarmé poems and her even stronger characterisation in *Chansons madécasses* that could be heard as a summation of her art.

In both discs, the artists surround themselves with attentive, first-class collaborators, Hendricks with the Swedish Chamber Ensemble and pianist Love Derwinger, MeglIORANZA with pianist Reiko Uchida playing an elegant-sounding 1890 Pleyel. MeglIORANZA isn't recorded to his best advantage – it's not the warmest acoustic imaginable and only captures some of the vocal richness that made him the Jesus of choice in New York performances of the *St Matthew Passion*.

Yet those who know his voice well might be astounded at how much it is transformed by the French language, which gives him a light baritone quality recalling the young Gérard Souzay, though with a faster vibrato. His manner in *La bonne chanson* is so inside the music that he approaches the text almost as conversation. The piano-only arrangement also shows how succinctly Fauré brought each song to an emotional conclusion, often before you know it. In some of the more hectic, madcap Poulenc

songs, Meglioranza doesn't quite have the verbal agility of Sophie Karthäuser in her splendid Poulenc *mélodies* disc on Harmonia Mundi (who else does?) but he also knows how to let the humour naturally emerge from the music. Especially in *La bestiaire*, he never falls into Souzay's heavy-handed animal characterisations that don't wear well on repeated hearings. **David Patrick Stearns**

Ferrandini

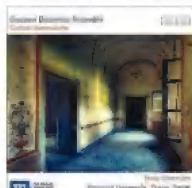
'Cantate drammatiche'

Cantatas – No 1, *Tinte a note di sangue*;
No 3, *All'apparir della vermiglia aurora*;
No 4, *Dell'idol mio trafitto*. Pastorale –
Sinfonia. Sinfonia in B flat

Olivia Vermeulen *mez*

Harmonie Universelle / Florian Deuter *vt*

Accent ⑤ ACC24277 (63' • DDD)



Until recently the Munich-based Venetian composer Giovanni Ferrandini

(1709-91) has probably been known to only a few attentive observers as the true author of an intensely dramatic passion cantata formerly misattributed to Handel (*Il pianto di Maria* – which has been recorded several times), but he was also the teacher of the tenor Anton Raaff (Mozart's first Idomeneo). This recording presents half the cantatas for solo soprano, strings and continuo preserved in a Dresden manuscript, probably composed in about 1750, and using poems probably written by Electress Maria Antonia Walpurgis of Saxony.

Olivia Vermeulen's delicate singing has just the right amount of emotional sincerity when describing a betrayed lover sending a suicide note to the woman who has been unfaithful to him (*Tinte a note di sangue*). The transcontinental Harmonie Universelle, directed by violinist Florian Deuter, plays melancholic string parts with lyrical sensitivity in the poignant aria 'Dite il vero bel fior' at the core of *All'apparir della vermiglia aurora* – the sunflower is bullied by other more fragrant and beautiful flowers in the meadow but it defends itself by pointing out that it has greater honour of constancy in comparison to the haughty, proud and ephemeral flowers (Böhmer suggests the admittedly plain Electress Maria Antonia was criticising the smug conduct of shallow beauties at court). Vermeulen and Harmonie Universelle excel at traversing an emotive spectrum during *Dell'idol mio trafitto*, which starts with sublimely beautiful *ombra* music to describe a young

woman hearing the ghost of her executed lover but culminates in a frenzied invocation of the furies. **David Vickers**

Gee

'Mouthpieces'

Mouthpiece – I; Segment of the 3rd Letter; VII^a; IX^a; X^a

Erin Gee *voc* Klangforum Wien / Johannes

Kalitzke; PHACE / Simeon Pironkoff; ORF Vienna

Radio Symphony Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Col Legno ⑤ WWEICD20409 (50' • DDD)

^aRecorded live



Music that uses the mouth as an instrument has evolved apace over

the past century and Erin Gee clearly has a contribution to make – her 'Mouthpiece' series a little redolent of the 'Vox' sequence that Trevor Wishart created during the 1980s, while being a singular statement in its own right. Although not immediately evident from this non-chronological selection, a gradual expansion of means would seem to be the premise. Thus *Mouthpiece I* is a brief statement of intent, which *Segment of the 3rd Letter* translates on to a more expressive and even sensuous aural canvas. *Mouthpiece VII* brings the various structural possibilities of this sound process into a keener and more potent focus, while the two-part format of *Mouthpiece IX* facilitates a varied dialogue between the 'soloist' and an orchestra rich in subtle and beguiling sonorities. *Mouthpiece X* takes this to an even higher level, in what thereby becomes a freewheeling though no doubt meticulously organised interplay between these competing sound sources.

A concept such as this inevitably has to divest itself of any 'novelty' connotations – which it does in this instance through the tangible virtuosity of Gee's formidable vocal execution, as well as the comparable (if relatively more orthodox) finesse of the instrumental component. It helps in the latter instance to have three of Austria's leading ensembles on board, the overall programme benefiting from vivid sound along with extensive notes from Martin Brody. Short measure, but perhaps a 'More Mouthpieces' follow-up is in the offing?

Richard Whitehouse

Gesualdo

Responsoria et alla ad Officium

Hebdomadae Sanctae spectantia

La Compagnia del Madrigale

Glossa ⑤ GCD922803 (3h 6' • DDD)



Gesualdo's Responsories for Holy Week need no introduction by

now; not so La Compagnia del Madrigale, a recently formed ensemble, several of whose members have been long-standing alumni of Concerto Italiano and (latterly) La Venexiana. Like these groups they are a mixed ensemble singing one-to-a-part, and this new release is a clear statement of intent. It's only the third complete recording of the set, as far as I'm aware, coming hot on the heels of Philippe Herreweghe's fine account, released late last year (the other being The Hilliard Ensemble's, made more than 20 years ago). The monumentality that I identified in both earlier sets seems consciously to have been avoided: indeed, the booklet-notes stake La Compagnia's claim to interpreting Gesualdo's sacred music in the light of his madrigals. The intriguing decision to place the Responsories in context by interspersing them with spiritual madrigals by Gesualdo and his contemporaries may be taken in the same sense.

Still, I struggle to discern a madrigalian colouring beyond what can be attributed to the ensemble's constitution. In contrapuntal passages in which each voice must hold its own line with a clear sense of purpose, the cast seems uneven. Long passages of the Good Friday set are insufficiently characterised: when, at the end of Friday's final Respond, Christ asks whether any pain is equal to his, there's little anguish. In the most overtly dramatic of the three days, Holy Saturday, it is as though the avoidance of monumentality is achieved at the expense of rhetorical bite (a point illustrated by the opening Respond, 'Sicut ovis', or the outburst proclaiming 'the day of the Lord, most great and bitter' in 'Plange quasi virgo': why don't those dissonances hurt, and why is the pulse not convulsed at such points?). Especially given the claims made for it, one expected a far more searching account and a stronger sense of direction from singers of this pedigree. Others may well respond more positively to this toned-down approach and yet feel that it could have been more convincingly executed. **Fabrice Fitch**

Comparative versions:

Hilliard Ens (3/92) (ECM) 843 867-2

Collegium Vocale Gent, Herreweghe (2/14) (PHI) LPH010

Larcher

Smart Dust^a. Poems^a. What Becomes^a.

A Padmore Cycle^b

^bMark Padmore *ten* ^bThomas Larcher,

*Tamara Stefanovich pf

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7604 (73' • DDD • T/A)



Coming to this disc as a Mark Padmore admirer – rather than as someone who has

followed the recorded trajectory of the composer Thomas Larcher – this collection of music seems to be a purposeful act of withholding. Padmore is preceded by 21 tracks of solo-piano Larcher, most of them extremely spare, some dating back to when the composer (b1965) was aged 12 – all unfolding without any illuminating effect on *A Padmore Cycle* (2010-11) when it finally arrives.

Larcher maintains a fascination with the unadorned note, often played in spacious, uncrowded circumstances that require a certain kind of concentration to determine what sort of an idea is unfolding. There are patches of density and even a strong pulse, particularly in the 2009 suite *What Becomes*, though one can wait for long stretches to hear something more than a two-note harmony. Arvo Pärt can be similarly pared down, Messiaen similarly oblique but with a sense of a larger experience behind it (the nature of which may not be easily explicated but you know it's there).

The special qualities of *A Padmore Cycle* would emerge in higher relief if surrounded by something more traditional. As it is, there's nothing new about the extended keyboard techniques that characterise the Hans Aschenwald and Alois Hotschnig texts that, in the hands of a composer such as Kurtág, might be flinty shards of experience but here seem like haiku blobs. The piano-writing is more than remote; it's distant. So numerous are the extended vocal techniques – loud exclamations, whispering, murmuring just above the level of audibility – that Padmore is barely allowed to sing. Doesn't that defeat the purpose of composing for him?

David Patrick Stearns

Mahler

Kindertotenlieder. Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen. Rückert-Lieder

Christian Gerhaher bar Montreal

Symphony Orchestra / Kent Nagano

Sony Classical © 88883 70133-2 (55' • DDD)



With Thomas Quasthoff retired, many would nominate Christian Gerhaher

as today's pre-eminent German Lieder baritone (the more controversial Goerne is the other obvious choice). He certainly lives up to his reputation in this Mahler disc, recorded at concerts in the fine, spacious acoustic of Montreal's new Maison Symphonique. As ever, Gerhaher combines vocal beauty and acute sensitivity to verbal and musical nuance with a certain patrician restraint. In the *Kindertotenlieder*, Gerhaher is less searing than Fischer-Dieskau, 1963 vintage (with Böhm, DG), Janet Baker (with Barbirolli, EMI) or Brigitte Fassbaender (with Chailly, Decca). But his concentrated inwardness is intensely moving, whether in the shifts between desolation and aching tenderness in 'Nun seh' ich wohl', or the sudden stab of anguish in 'Wenn dein Mütterlein' at the words 'O du, des Vaters Zelle', all the more shocking amid so much rarefied gentleness. For the transfigured close of the final song, Gerhaher finds an other-worldly *pianissimo* and a quality of spirituality. The Montreal orchestra (superlative wind solos) match the baritone in their sentient, compassionate playing, while Nagano keeps textures lucid in music where the voice is often treated as another instrument in the intricate contrapuntal weave.

Gerhaher also catches vividly, yet without exaggeration, the flux of emotions in the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. Nowhere is there a hint of melodrama or sentimentality. He smiles through heartache in the second song, where his top register rings out freely, never forces his tone in the expression of anguish in the violent third song (Nagano makes the most of Mahler's minatory, hard-edged orchestral colours here), and captures both the initial spiritual innocence and the unearthly close of 'Die zwei blauen Augen', with the final notes barely breathed.

In the *Rückert-Lieder*, Gerhaher has a similar knack of finding the right spirit and colour for each song. He sings a fleet, deftly pointed 'Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder' and a dreamily withdrawn 'Ich atmet' einen linden Duft'. For all his sensitivity, 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' arguably needs a broader tempo to realise all of its self-communing rapture (compare Baker and Fischer-Dieskau). But the flowing tempo for 'Um Mitternacht' works well. Gerhaher is hushed and fearful at the opening, warms to a rounded, ardent *forte* as the music moves from minor to major, and clinches the high-lying climax without forcing, helped by the careful balancing of brass and wind against the voice. The microphones pick up Barbirolli-style grunts and mumbles from Nagano. But that nigger

hardly compromises one of the finest baritone versions of these cycles since Fischer-Dieskau. Gerhaher's many fans will need no encouragement. **Richard Wigmore**

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Fischer-Dieskau, BPO, Böhm, Bavarian RSO, Kubelik (8/64th, 8/72nd) (DG) 477 9375GOR

Baker, Hallé, New Philh Orch, Barbirolli

(2/68th, 12/69th, A/13) (EMI) 208087-2 or 903771-2

Fassbaender, Deutsches SO Berlin, Chailly

(4/94th) (DECC) 473 725-2DF2

Poulenc

'Intégrale des mélodies pour voix et piano'

Pascale Beaudin, Julie Fuchs, Hélène Guilmette

sops Julie Boulianne mezz Marc Boucher,

François Le Roux bars Olivier Godin pf

ATMA Classique © 5 ACD2 2688 (5h 10' • DDD • T)



Among French singers, François Le Roux has been

one of the foremost

in revealing the delights and diversity of Poulenc's songs during recent decades. His participation in this five-disc set, both as baritone and as author of a perceptive introductory essay, is of particular value: the voice itself might not now always be as focused or consistent as it once was but you only have to listen to his interpretations of *Banalités*, the *Quatre Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire* and 'Le toréador' on the first disc or the tiny 'Pierrot' on the second to appreciate that he has a profound understanding of how to 'act' and characterise the songs through his seasoned response to the colours, inflections and stimuli of the music and texts.

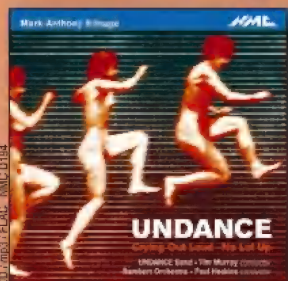
'Pierrot' might be tiny but the following song, 'Vive Nadia', is even tinier at a mere 15 seconds. Its singer is the Canadian baritone Marc Boucher, a good foil to Le Roux throughout the set and one who exercises a smooth lyrical talent and expressive pungency in such meatier fare as the paean to the animal kingdom in *Le bestiaire* and the poetic vignettes of contemporary painters by Paul Eluard in *Le travail du peintre*. Alongside Le Roux and Boucher there are three sopranos and a mezzo, all nicely contrasted in timbre and temperament, and Olivier Godin is the remarkably versatile, stylishly observant pianist. Julie Fuchs brings a lovely soubrette sparkle to the first two of the *Trois Poèmes de Louise de Vilmorin* and a more rapt intensity to the third one. Pascale Beaudin similarly encompasses a broad expressive range from the solemn 'Est-il un coin plus solitaire' in the *Quatre Poèmes de Max Jacob* to the childlike

NEW RELEASES



HARRISON BIRTWISTLE **GAWAIN**

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John Tomlinson · Francois Le Roux
The Royal Opera Chorus Orchestra of
the Royal Opera House / Howarth
Birtwistle's fascination with myth
and ritual has influenced many of
his works and this opera, its libretto
by David Harsent, is based on the
Arthurian legend of Sir Gawain and
the Green Knight, with a plot featuring
castles, eerie nocturnal apparitions, evil
magical powers, amorous entangle-
ments and a singing decapitated head.



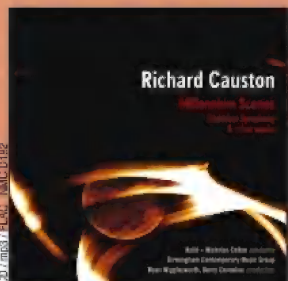
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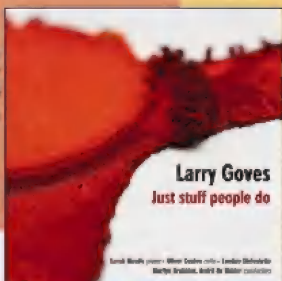
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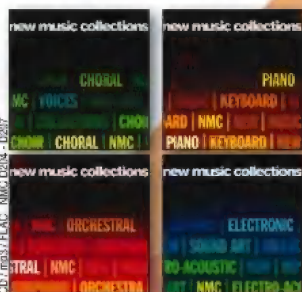
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Stage to gallery: Jean Tubéry gestures to Ensemble La Fenice's semi-chorus as they perform Purcell at Lyons Trinity Chapel

imagery of the *Quatre Chansons pour enfants* and the mix of contemplation and gaiety in Poulenc's last cycle, *La courte paille*. Hélène Guilmette is radiantly animated in the *Airs chantés* and *Fiançailles pour rire*.

This complete set of Poulenc's cycles and single songs – 170 songs in all – emphasises that it was the interweaving of voice and verse that he found to be the most fertile medium for his imagination to take wing. The language of his chosen poets ignites brilliant, beautifully crafted miniatures, and even his rare forays into non-French territory such as the *Huit Chansons polonaises*, beautifully sung here by Julie Boulianne, are marked by the same immediacy and sensibility. **Geoffrey Norris**

Purcell

'Serenading Songs & Grounds'

Hark how the wild musicians sing, Z542. Soft notes and gently raised (A Serenading Song) Z510. Sonata, Z795. King Arthur – Fairest Isle: Hornpipe (Act 3). A New Irish Tune, Z646. A Ground in Gamut, Z645. Voluntary on the 100th Psalm, Z721. How pleasant is this flowery plain and grove!, Z543. Three Treble Parts upon a Ground, Z731. A New Ground, Z T682. Music for a while, Z583. The Tempest – No stars again shall hurt you

Hana Blažiková, Celine Scheen *sops* **Paulin Bündgen** *countertenor* **Jan Van Elsacker** *ten* **Stephan MacLeod** *bass* **Ensemble La Fenice / Jean Tubéry**
ARS Produktion © ARS38 525 (54' • DDD)



Purcell's music is above all memorably tuneful in a new way for English music. But apart from its prolific melody, it also has two highly individual features – the manifest appeal of the often haunting poems and, structurally, the regular use of the ostinato bass (ground) in both his vocal and instrumental music. With regard to the texts of his songs, the editor of the posthumous anthology *Orpheus Britannicus* (published in 1698), Henry Playford, praised Purcell's 'particular genius to express the energy of English words' and especially the 'serenading songs'.

The opening number here, 'Hark how the wild musicians sing', is a prime example, with two or three singers alternating tenderness and wildness, accompanied by two treble recorders and basso continuo. 'Soft notes and gently raised' which follows (rapturously sung by Céline Scheen) is a lyrical song with a recorder obbligato, which soon becomes a duet with the bass, Stephan MacLeod. We all know 'The Old Hundredth' and it is presented magnetically in three forms, including an organ voluntary, vividly played by David Van Bouwel on the fine organ at the Lyons Trinity Chapel where

the recordings were made.

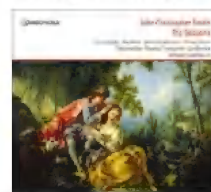
The ambitious instrumental Sonata in Three Parts shows Purcell's skill in following the style of the 'most fam'd Italian masters' and how inventively he did it, while the Three Treble Parts upon a Ground is equally resourceful and ear-tickling. But it is Purcell's tunes that count, not least the lovely 'Fairest Isle', sung here very beautifully by Hana Blažiková, and 'Music for a while', again featuring the delightful Céline Scheen. Throughout the Ensemble La Fenice directed by Jean Tubéry give admirable support.

Ivan March

JC Smith

The Seasons

Emma Kirkby *sop* **Tim Mead** *countertenor* **Hans Jörg Mammel** *ten* **Markus Simon** *bass* **Musica Franconia Festival Choir; La Banda / Wolfgang Riedelbauch**
Christophorus (M) © CHR77382 (93' • DDD)



Ah yes: John Christopher Smith, *geboren* Johann Christoph Schmidt,

whom Handel invited to London in 1716 to look after his business affairs. But no: this is John Christopher Smith (1712-95), to whom Handel dictated music after he had gone blind, and who helped keep the

flame burning after the composer's death. Smith was the son of Smith: they must have caused their bank manager some confusion.

The younger Smith was a composer in his own right, though not a very fortunate one. Some of his works remained unperformed in his lifetime, some have been lost; of those that survive, some are incomplete. *The Seasons* was composed in 1740. The text comes from James Thomson's poem, published in its complete form only 10 years earlier; but rather than drawing on the four parts that later formed the basis of Haydn's oratorio, Smith set the concluding 'Hymn', where Nature is enjoined to praise the Creator. Smith made several changes to Thomson's verse and omitted the end, perhaps not relishing the challenge of finding music for 'Come, then, expressive Silence, muse His praise!'

In its evocation of the pastoral world, *The Seasons* has something in common with Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, which also dates from 1740 and which Smith must have known. The shorter first part briefly reviews the seasons, all except winter preceded by a sinfonia. In the second part, the winds, floods, forests, sun, moon and so on are addressed in turn. The only living things to get a look-in are the birds and wild beasts; the culmination is, of course, mankind, 'for whom the whole creation smiles'.

Smith's music makes for very pleasant listening. Most of the features that you would expect are there: fugal choruses, hunting horns, violin and cello solos, melismas on 'rage' and 'roar', and several instances of writing for the strings in octaves. The last air, and the longest, is 'Sweetest of birds'; not wholly dissimilar, shall we say, to 'Sweet bird' in *L'Allegro*. It is exquisitely sung by the ageless Emma Kirkby who, with the pure-toned Tim Mead, is the star of the set. In saying so, I don't mean to knock the other performers: Wolfgang Riedelbauch and, especially, the orchestra are excellent.

Richard Lawrence

Veneziano

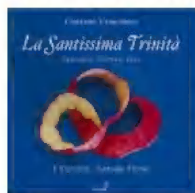
La Santissima Trinità

Cristina Grifone, Leslie Visco *sops* Filippo Mineccia

countertenor Rosario Totaro *ten* Giuseppe Naviglio

bass I Turchini / Antonio Florio

Glossa Ⓢ GCD922607 (69' • DDD)



Gaetano Veneziano (1665-1715) trained in Naples and taught for most of his life at the city's Conservatorio di S Maria di Loreto.

Most of his music seems to be lost but recently four hitherto unknown oratorios turned up in the composer's own manuscript, now in the library of Brussels Conservatoire; the first of these is *La Santissima Trinità* (1693). It is a single-act allegory in which God the Father (Omnipotence), the Son (Divine Love) and the Holy Spirit (Wisdom) defend the Blessed Virgin against Sin (the bass, who represents Satan).

Sapienza's 'Quanto so, voglio crearla' (sung ardently by Filippo Mineccia) and the Virgin Mary's 'Il più bello, il più nobile oggetto' (sung with chaste purity by Leslie Visco) reveal an attractive and concise aria style that bears close comparison to Alessandro Scarlatti. The Blessed Virgin's longer aria 'Il tuo stral divino arciero' features an obbligato violin, played compassionately by Alessandro Ciccolini. Cristina Grifone's Divine Love sometimes sings a little harshly and sharp, and I would like to hear a more mellifluous tenor than the nasal Rosario Totaro singing Onnipotenza's benign expressions of wisdom, but the arrival of Giuseppe Naviglio's menacing Sin gives proceedings a dramatic shot in the arm, and all five singers declaim their texts with crystalline clarity. As befits their years of experience in his repertoire, Antonio Florio and I Turchini present valuable evidence of the musical merits of a neglected generation of Italian composers. **David Vickers**

Vivaldi

'Cantatas'

All'ombra d'un bel faggio, RV649. Allor che lo sguardo, RV650. Che giova il sospirar, povero core, RV679. Lungi dal vago volto, RV680. Perché son molli, RV681

Deirdre Moynihan *sop* Ensemble Nota Velata
Naxos Ⓢ 8 573003 (55' • DDD • T/t)



Michael Talbot judges that Vivaldi's cantatas accompanied only by basso continuo

'constitute the least innovative portion of his output, but by no means the least expertly written'. They are also among the least often explored outer reaches of the composer's vast output, so it is welcome that Deirdre Moynihan records two of the rarely performed continuo-only solo soprano cantatas (*Allor che lo sguardo* and *All'ombra d'un bel faggio*): cellist Aoife Nic Athlaioich and harpsichordist David Adams accompany with unfussiness and skilful judgement. These are interspersed between cantatas featuring varying numbers of

additional instruments in this thoughtfully planned recital: a single violin (*Lungi dal vago volto*), two violins (*Perché son molli*) and four-part strings including viola (*Che giova il sospirar, povero core*).

Moynihan and Ensemble Nota Velata give neat and orderly performances. Claire Duff's stylish solo violin-playing is an eloquent foil to the voice part in the first aria of *Lungi dal vago volto*, although Moynihan's light timbre suffers a little from being very closely recorded, which makes it sound tightly pinched and detracts from her delicate trills and agile embellishments. Likewise, the editing sometimes prohibits a sense of a lifelike actual performance with quick fades between the ends of recitatives and their ensuing arias. Still, Vivaldians will welcome the opportunity to hear the pastoral rolling violins and drone bass notes in the first aria of *Perché son molli*, a fine cantata that reminds us how much treasure there is to find even in the remotest nooks and crannies of Vivaldi's works. **David Vickers**

Wolf

'The Complete Songs, Vol 7'

Spanisches Liederbuch – Weltliche Lieder

Birgid Steinberger *sop* Anna Huntley *mez*

Benjamin Hulett *ten* Marcus Farnsworth *bar*

Sholto Kynoch *pf*

Stone Records Ⓢ 5060192 780345 (71' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford, October 13 & 15, 2012



Hugo Wolf's *Spanisches Liederbuch* has been recorded by many of the

great Wolf singers. But this youngish, lesser-known foursome have much to offer, not in the deeply studied manner of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (who treat almost every song as an entire world unto itself) but in pianist Sholto Kynoch's way of just letting the music sing. The songs reveal perhaps smaller slices of poetic life but are wonderfully cogent in purely musical respects.

Rather than dividing among two singers according to gender, this set has four, chosen well for their individual strengths, such as tenor Benjamin Hulett's handling of text-heavy songs such as 'Da nur Leid und Leidenschaft'. Anna Huntley's mezzo-soprano provides needed gravity to the likes of 'Geh, Geliebter, geh jetzt!' (though some songs enter the less stable areas of her range). Baritone Marcus Farnsworth has the most sonorous voice of the four; you're

happy to hear him sing almost anything.

If anyone dominates the set, it's soprano Birgid Steinberger, who sings roughly a third of the 34 songs. And though the others dispute Schwarzkopf's belief that being a native German speaker is all but mandatory for Wolf, the Bavarian-born Steinberger, who is also more seasoned than the others, makes the set a more essential acquisition. Her soprano is an agile borderline soubrette that often gives you the face as well as the soul of a song's protagonist. One respects her all the more for her willingness to sacrifice tone at the expense of character, namely for the many wronged women who populate Wolf's songs. **David Patrick Stearns**

Selected comparison:

Schwarzkopf, Fischer-Dieskau, Moore

(5/68*, 4/79*, 3/89*) (DG) 457 726-2G0R2

'Bella dama'

Porpora *Salve regina* **A Scarlatti** *Bella dama di nome Santa. Infirmata vulnerata*
Vivaldi *Cessate, omai cessate*, RV684

Raffaele Pé *countertenor* **Spiritato!**

Resonus © RES10115 (58' • DDD • T/t)



This is a promising sign, not only from the Italian countertenor Raffaele Pé but also

the recently founded band Spiritato!, which consists of the new generation of London-based specialist Baroque instrumentalists. Although I wish stuff this good was being issued on good old-fashioned physical formats by Resonus Classics, the digital-only label's website offers a free download of a booklet containing artwork, essay and sung texts.

Vivaldi's *Cessate, omai cessate* has become

staple countertenor fodder since Andreas Scholl shot to fame with his famous recording but there is no hint of complacent emulation or routine in the freshly balanced *pizzicato* strings and subtly dramatic singing in 'Ah, ch'infelice sempre'. Pé copes pretty well with taxing long reams of soft coloratura that stretch his technique to its limit in the florid opening and closing parts of Porpora's antiphon *Salve regina*. Alessandro Scarlatti's *Bella dama di nome Santa* starts with a delectable 'Introduttione' that features bright recorder-playing by László Rózsa; the disarming cantata describes the jealous ranting of a jilted lover whose ex-girlfriend Santa does not deserve her sainted name. It is an enigmatic question whether Scarlatti's peculiar motet *Infirmata, vulnerata* is secular love poetry or a sacred devotion; but if anyone still doubts that the elder Scarlatti is a great composer in his own right, just listen to Pé and Spiritato! performing 'Vulnera percute, transfige cor'. **David Vickers**

'La bella più bella'

'Songs from Early Baroque Italy'

Caccini *Dalla porta d'oriente*; *Dolcissimo sospiro*; *Torna, deh torna* **Carissimi** *Piangete, aure piangete* **Castaldi** *Tasteggio soave* - *Sonata prima* **B Ferrari** *Son ruinato, appassionato* **d'India** *Cruda Amarilli* **Kapsberger** *Ciaccona. Ninna nanna. Toccata sesta* **Merula** *Folle e ben che si crede* **Monteverdi** *Ecco di dolci raggi. Eri già tutta mia. Voglio di vita uscir* **Piccinini** *Aria di saravanda in varie partita. Toccata* **V G Romano** *Strana armonia d'amore* **Rossi** *La bella più bella. A qual dardo* **Strozzi** *L'Eraclito amoroso, 'Udite amanti'. Mi fa rider la speranza*
Roberta Invernizzi *sop*
Craig Marchitelli *archlute/theo*
Glossa © GCD922902 (77' • DDD)



The songs and madrigals of early-17th-century Italy are dramatic microcosms – arias from unwritten operas that carry the emotional and dramatic weight of their silent context. This new disc explores the rich musical worlds of musical miniaturists, whose skill is all in the detail.

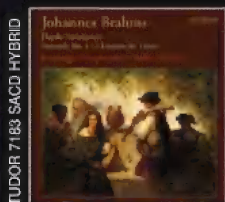
Drama is immediately to the fore. We open in literal discord, as Giulio Romano's 'Strana armonia d'amore' conjures the 'strange harmony of love'. It seizes the ear and holds our attention as it unfolds in freewheeling, recitative-like convulsions. Invernizzi and Marchitelli display the full range of this repertoire in their choices, from the swaying dance of Ferrari's 'Son ruinato', wearing its tragedy lightly, to the unblinking intensity of Caccini's 'Torna, deh torna' and the improvisatory, arioso freedom of Strozzi's 'Udite amanti'.

Invernizzi's delivery is forthright, refusing to relax and bloom into vibrato until the very last, digging deep into the suspensions that give this music its emotional friction. She delivers operatic scope within the intimate framework of a vocal recital. Shifting between theorbo and the more agile archlute, Marchitelli offers fluent support, occasionally stepping into the spotlight in instrumental numbers – a *ciaccona* lively with stamp and swagger and Piccinini's folk-simple 'Aria di saravanda'.

Recorded close, this disc has all the brightness and directness of a live performance, compelling in a way that Raquel Andueza's similar 2009 'D'amore e tormenti' – a glossy, soft-focus production – just isn't. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Robin Ticciati

Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks
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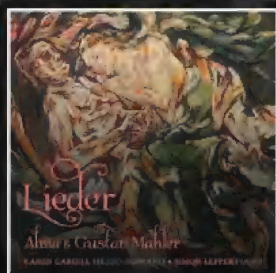
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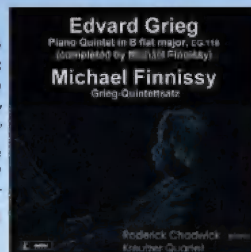
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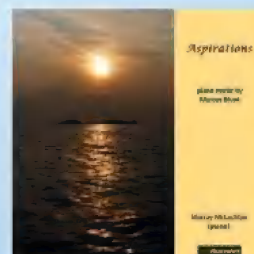
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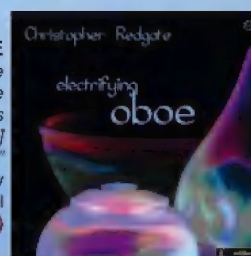
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GOTTFRIED AUGUST HOMILIUS

Fabrice Fitch listens to three discs from Carus's series aiming to popularise the music of a Saxon contemporary of Bach's sons



Verve and style: Rainer Johannes Homburg and Handel's Company illuminate Homilius's varied cantatas

I confess that until now Gottfried August Homilius was known to me only by name. Born exactly 300 years ago, this Saxon composer spent most of his working life in the service of the churches of Dresden (from 1742), having studied previously for a time with JS Bach in Leipzig, and died in 1785 with a reputation as the finest church composer of his day, and one of its finest organists. If you think that's not a bad CV, the music is even more impressive. On these recordings there's comparatively little of the emotional turmoil that characterises much of the work of his direct contemporaries Emanuel and Friedemann Bach; instead, there's an intriguing blend of overtly old-fashioned motet-style writing and the newest 'sensitive style' trends. Those who come to his music for the first time will be intrigued to discern familiar stylistic echoes reminiscent of this or that composer but expressed in a way that seems quite distinctive. These three new recordings form part of Carus Verlag's long-term project devoted to his rehabilitation, if that's not too strong a term. On this showing Homilius cuts a slightly more conservative figure than Bach's elder sons; but, at his not infrequent best, he is more than deserving of the attention.

The disc devoted exclusively to his cantatas is very fine indeed, with a handful of impressive and nicely contrasted selections performed with great verve

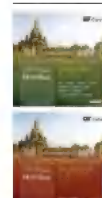
'In Homilius's anniversary year, these cantatas are something of a revelation'

and style by Handel's Company and its associated choir, conducted by Rainer Johannes Homburg. The soloists are well chosen, soprano Marie-Pierre Roy contributing an extended and very affecting aria in the opening, turbulent work for the first Sunday of New Year, *Warum toben den Heiden*. In the more festive Advent cantata, *Frohlocke, Zion, dein Erlöser*, it is the alto Henriette Gödde's turn to impress in another lengthy aria, though here the opening chorus is scarcely less elaborate. A more searching tone is struck in the cantata for the second Sunday after Epiphany, *In der Zeit meiner Not*, which opens with a strikingly spare duo for violin and oboe, accompanied by a lone cello without continuo. After the flamboyance of what precedes, such restraint comes as a real surprise. In yet another contrast, the final cantata, *Steig, Allgewaltiger, von deinem festen Sitze*, opens with an impassioned recitative, punctuated by a compact choral outburst. No work follows exactly the same format and, as each embodies a different mood, the disc is full of incident. It's hard to imagine a more felicitous introduction to an unfamiliar composer – and in an anniversary year to boot, this is something of a revelation.

Still more remarkable is the volume of German and Latin motets for unaccompanied choir from Sirventes Berlin, directed by Stefan Schuck. I was continually reminded of Bach's (not an unreasonable point of reference, I guess), and impressed at the range of techniques and expression, at times impeccably up-to-date, now sounding not unlike Schütz, then appearing in a few harmonic inflections to foreshadow Peter Cornelius. The opening work is a case in point, alternating short exchanges between pairs of voices and full scoring, *tutti* and pedal passages in octaves, then suddenly a familiar chorale in parallel chords in the upper voices supporting a more florid bass, exactly like a pedal episode from an organ chorale variation. This is the choir treated instrumentally, and it's utterly involving. With the exception of a Latin Magnificat setting, most of the motets on this disc are relatively compact but pack easily as much incident as the cantatas. The singing is more than equal to the considerable demands made of it, maintaining a marvellous transparent texture throughout, sensitive or resplendent as required: one of the high points in my listening year so far.

The third offering is a double CD on the theme of music at the Dresden Frauenkirche, containing a mix of cantatas, organ preludes and instrumental works. Recorded over several years (the earliest session took place 10 years ago), this project is not quite as cohesive as the others; and while worth experiencing alongside them, the performances (and in fairness the works themselves) don't quite have the same sureness of touch. The accompanying essays for all three releases are informative and show a touching commitment to showcasing this singularly intriguing composer. Were I to recommend one of them, I'd plump for the motet volume, because whereas the cantatas mark Homilius out as a musician of his time, in the motets he gives the impression of transcending it. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Homilius Cantatas
Handel's Company / Homburg
Carus © CARUS83 267

Homilius Motets, Vol 2
Sirventes Berlin / Schuck
Carus © CARUS83 266

Homilius Music at the Dresden Frauenkirche
Dresden Kreuzchor / Kreile Carus © ② CARUS83 268

REISSUES

James Jolly surveys two box-sets of Blomstedt and Marriner, and **Peter Quantrill** assesses Zinman's legacy

Record-makers

Herbert Blomstedt in California and Sir Neville Marriner in London

Decca has a long and successful history of cultivating orchestra-conductor pairings that became powerful recording partnerships with a truly international reach – think of the Suisse Romande Orchestra and Ernest Ansermet in the early stereo age or the Montreal SO and Charles Dutoit in the digital era. The same magic occurred when Decca started its relationship with **Herbert Blomstedt** and the **San Francisco Symphony Orchestra**, a partnership that ran from 1985 to 1995 (Blomstedt is now the orchestra's conductor laureate). Under the SFSO's two previous music directors, Seiji Ozawa (1970-77) and Edo de Waart (1977-85), recordings *had* been made but generally of more unusual repertoire (de Waart's legacy was creditably

'Blomstedt allowed the ensemble's natural litheness and flexibility full rein'

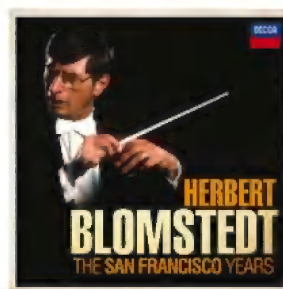
modern-focused). Blomstedt, though, concentrated on the core repertoire (these *were* the boom years of the CD), bringing a discipline and depth to the sound while allowing the ensemble's natural litheness and flexibility full rein. Decca's 15-CD set features many of the partnership's highlights: it's not comprehensive, as the Nielsen and Sibelius cycles are represented by one disc each, and recordings of Strauss, Bruckner and Hindemith have been omitted too.

Decca created its San Francisco sound by placing the orchestra on a stage extension that jutted out over the first six or so rows of the audience seats in Davies Symphony Hall. The results were wonderfully clear, slightly cool but not lacking in body, and under producer Andrew Cornall's guidance, engineers James Lock, John Pellowe and Stanley Goodall made some lovely recordings.

A number of the performances are very fine without being life-changing – Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 1 and 3, Bruckner's Fourth, Mendelssohn's *Scottish* and *Italian* and Schubert's *Great* all receive performances that would send you out into the San Francisco night more than satisfied had you been there. The playing is generally magnificent and internal balance beautifully handled (no wonder Blomstedt is still in demand the world over to bring old-school discipline and style wherever he guests).

The Nielsen Second and Third won a *Gramophone* Orchestral Award, and although numerous recordings have come out since (often with more 'authentic' ensembles), Blomstedt's are still notable. Back in August 1990, Robert Layton wondered 'whether the orchestra is not at an early stage of discovering this music for there is a genuine excitement about their performance'. A Sibelius symphony cycle followed the Nielsen cycle and is here represented by Nos 1 and 7, along with *Tapiola*, so you get a pretty good idea of Blomstedt's approach to the different demands of early and 'late' Sibelius – the very clear sound picture works well for this music (the opening of the First being particularly atmospheric). Blomstedt's Swedish nationality and upbringing (he was born in the US) made a couple of Berwald symphonies an obvious choice, and he delivers delightfully poised readings of this most-neglected of early 19th-century composers.

There are some blockbusters here too, including a Mahler Second (now accommodated on a single disc thanks to the removal of the epic pause that Mahler requested after the opening movement and which Decca actually built into the first track when the set first came out).



It was rather coolly reviewed on its release: its care and attention to detail may rob it of some of the overwhelming impact it needs, but Blomstedt builds the performance with real skill and the effect is cumulatively powerful. You sense that the result is exactly what Blomstedt wanted, for bombast isn't in his book. Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* is sure-footedly though slowly scaled and gloriously recorded, and Orff's *Carmina burana* is first-rate – thrillingly played, lustily sung and stunningly recorded.

The Mahler and the Orff employ the excellent San Francisco Symphony Chorus (director Vance George), who acquit themselves superbly on one of my favourite Blomstedt discs – a collection of Brahms's choral music with a *Begräbnisgesang* of restrained emotion which joins *Nänie*, the *Alto Rhapsody* (with Jard van Nes on superb form), the *Schicksalslied* and the *Gesang der Parzen*. The *German Requiem*, on a separate disc, receives a very fine performance: Wolfgang Holzmair is an eloquent baritone soloist and Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz makes much of her words in her solo. Again, the choral work is superb and there is some lovely woodwind playing over some particularly silky string tone. A disc of Grieg's *Peer Gynt* incidental music is great fun, and it's good to be reminded of all the music that we don't hear when we listen to the suites. Urban Malmberg and MariAnne Häggander throw themselves into their roles at the heart of the drama.

A closing mention for performances by two others composers: Bartók's *Kossuth*



(his first orchestral work, coupled with his last, a striking and trim Concerto for Orchestra) allows the orchestra to display a huge range of colour, and a Hindemith collection – the *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, *Trauermusik*, *Matthis der Maler* Symphony and the *Concert Music* – is a winner. (Why isn't this regular concert fare? It has everything – though it's hard to imagine it done this well that often.)

Original sleeve design adorns each cardboard wallet, and there's a nice note by Scott Foglesong which tells the Blomstedt–San Francisco story economically.

If the Suisse Romande/Ansermet and Montreal SO/Dutoit partnerships were given a recording dimension by Decca, another was conceived by its founders almost exclusively as a recording ensemble: the **Academy of St Martin in the Fields** directed by **Neville Marriner** (initially from the violin and then purely from the podium). It's one of the great industry success stories of the past 50 years and, as Marriner celebrates his 90th birthday this spring, Decca has mined its catalogue to create a splendid 28-CD set 'The Argo Years' (with a trio of ASV discs thrown in for good measure).

The range of music here is remarkable – everything from the Baroque to some of the accessible small-scale orchestral repertoire of the last century (Britten, Prokofiev, Copland, Stravinsky), and the playing is uniformly stylish, energised, crisp and expressive. The box will set you back £69 at Presto Classical and it would be money well spent, as there's so much to enjoy: actually, it would be a wonderful

way into classical music, as it embraces so much of the 'core' but also has its share of less familiar repertoire.

The ASMF's way with music of the Baroque (an interest in which it did so much to revive) may have been overtaken by the period-instrument movement in terms of the actual sound, but the approach, dynamism and attention to the shaping of phrases still resonate appealingly, even if the slow movements are a little more languid and expansive than we're used to nowadays (the famous Air from Bach's Third Suite is really rather lush!). From the Baroque there's Handel's Op 3 Concerti grossi, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (with violinist Alan Loveday), all four of Bach's Orchestral Suites, Corelli's Op 6, Vivaldi's Op 4 and a Telemann programme. With Thurston Dart and Christopher Hogwood among the performers and editors, many of these performances have excellent credentials. On the Baroque choral front, there's a fine 1976 *Messiah* (in its 1743 London edition – so be prepared for a few surprises) with excellent solo singing from Elly Ameling, Anna Reynolds, Philip Langridge and Gwynne Howell, and some superb choral work from László Heltay's ASMF Chorus. Marriner keeps everything nipping along with lively rhythms and stylish phrasing.

The ASMF's recordings of music from the Classical period need no caveats: his Mozart symphonies (Nos 25, 26, 27, 29 and 32) are beautifully judged; his Weber symphonies (one of the ASV titles) are well worth exploring; and his Mendelssohn – *Scottish* and *Italian* Symphonies, Octet, Double Piano Concerto and early concerto for piano

and strings, with John Ogdon – is all perfectly gauged and delivered with real sparkle (the *Seberzo* from the Octet fairly whips along). The recording of the Mozart Requiem dates from 1977 and has a fine line-up of soloists (Cotrubas, Watts, Tear, Shirley-Quirk) who sing with touching gravity, if without the seductive sheen of Marriner's Philips line-up from 1991 (with Sylvia McNair the heavenly soprano).

String music always brought out the best in Marriner and the ASMF, and there's a great selection here: serenades from Dvořák and Tchaikovsky along with Grieg's *Holberg Suite*, Barber's Adagio, Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* and Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète*, as well as a gorgeous disc of Scandinavian music that includes Dag Wirén's enchanting Serenade. A couple of the ASV interlopers are also charmers – 'The English Connection' includes Vaughan Williams's *Tallis Fantasia*, Elgar's Serenade and Tippett's *Corelli Fantasia* concertante, while 'The French Connection' contains Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Fauré's *Dolly Suite*, Ibert's *Divertissement* and Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane*.

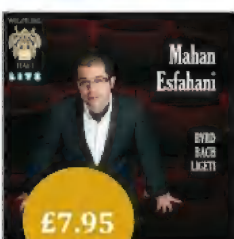
With an excellent essay by Tully Potter and original artwork on each wallet, this is a set I'm going to keep in the car and listen to again and again. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Various Cpsrs San Francisco Years **Blomstedt**
Decca © 478 6787DC15

Various Cpsrs Argo Years **Marriner**
Decca © (28 discs) 478 6883DC28

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Zinman in Zurich

Peter Quantrill re-evaluates the symphonic legacy of David Zinman's two decades at the helm of the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra



David Zinman is now 77, and made all these recordings in his 60s and 70s, but his bold ways of approaching familiar music tend to belie that age. Having been music director of the Tonhalle Zurich since 1995, he steps down this summer, leaving an orchestra with a formidably focused corporate sound image and a dense, middle-European wind band at its core.

The Beethoven cycle was done in the years after his arrival in Zurich and contains more notes than any comparable set yet released, even if Beethoven didn't write quite a number of them. To me the trills and lurching accents in the slow introduction to the Second Symphony are still mannered and attention-seeking, even as they place Beethoven within a context in terms of thinned-out orchestral texture that makes the early symphonies authentic leaps forward from Haydn. The *Larghetto* is a rococo extravaganza mired in curlicue decoration and punctuated by metronomic bass accents. The best of Zinman's Beethoven, however – let's pick the Fourth, which the conductor himself declared his favourite recording when interviewed for *Gramophone* (1/12) – is an explosive pre-echo of Picasso's contention that 'a painting is not meant to decorate a room, it is an attack and defence weapon against the enemy'. To use expressive terminology that Zinman might himself disdain, the Fourth is violent



and dangerous, while the odd-numbered grand statements freewheel with a dance-centred exhilaration that disconcerts those who value the certainty and solid virtues of the Austro-German canon. Forget the touted fidelity to the then-new

Del Mar editions and you may relish the provisionality of these recordings, even including the baffling Trio to the Ninth, surely the fastest on record. Stravinsky could hardly have imagined that Beethoven would sound so much like a kindred spirit.

Beethoven's music asks for a different kind of interpretative improvisation to Schubert's – especially given that Schubert heard hardly any of his symphonies performed adequately himself. For all the talk of symphonic testaments, it may do us as listeners no harm once in a while to be reminded that these works were once no more fixed in content than the documents to which the term originally refers. It takes not just determination but courage to do these things, for which Zinman and the orchestra deserve much credit. The first movement of Schubert's Second embraces the groundhog-day spirit of the piece, nurturing the germination of his symphonic thought and its layering of repetition that finds fulfilment in the Ninth, while the Eighth is an object demonstration of how adherence to a swift basic tempo (in both movements) need not compromise the potential for expressive power that many of us find in older

recordings: it's a remarkable performance of relentless and gripping anguish. For me the most consistently enlightening of the cycles in this box, the Schubert is currently only otherwise available as single, full-price discs; even if you're familiar and happy with Harnoncourt, Davis or Abbado, I'd urge you to hear it.

From the foregoing, you may expect the Schumann set to be full of the 'obsessive, manic qualities' identified by Zinman at the time of its original release (5/04), and perhaps more surprisingly a residue of the ornamentation that may reflect the composer's own inheritance, not so much from Beethoven as from Baroque models of harmony and counterpoint, especially in the Second and Third. Improvisation can still be found within the Brahms cycle, not in terms of the notes themselves but a greater flexibility of tempo that reflects not only Brahms's own documented practice but the more ruminative temper of this long-gestated cycle. Here it's easiest to hear the productive influence (subtly evident throughout the box) of Zinman's teacher, Pierre Monteux, even if, paradoxically, he's closer to Monteux the provocateur and sabre-rattler in Paris and Boston than the grand old man in London. Like Zinman, Monteux gives the impression that there hasn't yet been a good piece written that you can't dance to.

The Brahms cycle was made live, which may account not for a difference in sound spectrum but a slight rigidity of purpose; the narrative finales of the First and Fourth feel predetermined, their tempo shifts quite square and set. Zinman is a conducting animal happy in studio conditions, and in some ways the most thought-provoking music-making in the set comes with Mahler and music that has so often been thought to thrive in one-off occasions and wilt under forensic examination. But Mahler wrote like Beckmesser the manic marker while aspiring towards Balzac the lyric poet, and Zinman honours both, even if he is more evidently comfortable with the Classical manners of the Fourth – 'the only truly perfect symphony he ever wrote', according to the conductor, asking more questions than he answers – than the outer reaches of Mahler's meta-symphonic ambitions in, say, the Third, Seventh and Eighth. However familiar you are with any of these scores, Zinman should help you question what you think you know. And if you don't know them yet, why not start here? **©**

THE RECORDING

Various Cpsrs Great Syms Zurich Tonhalle / Zinman RCA (50 discs) 88843 02728-2

Opera



Arnold Whittall on two La Scala instalments of Barenboim's Ring:
'Barenboim provides a masterclass in Wagner interpretation that need fear no comparison with the greatest of his precursors' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**

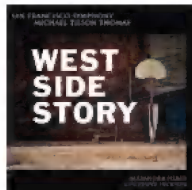


Mike Ashman listens to a box full of Pavarotti's early recordings:
'Here is singing we can call great without resorting to lazy modern hype' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**

Bernstein

West Side Story

Alexandra Silber *sop*.....Maria
 Cheyenne Jackson *sgr*.....Tony
 Jessica Vosk *sgr*.....Anita
 Kevin Vortmann *sgr*.....Riff
 Juliana Hansen *sgr*.....Rosalia
 Louise Cornillez *sop*.....Consuela
 Cassie Simone *sgr*.....Francisca
 Justin Keyes *sgr*.....Action
 Zach Ford *sgr*.....Diesel
 Chris Meissner *sgr*.....Baby John
 Louis Pardo *sgr*.....A-rab
 Kelly Markgraf *bar*.....Bernardo
 David Michael Laffey *sgr*.....Big Deal
 Julia Bullock *sgr*.....Girl
 San Francisco Symphony Chorus and Orchestra /
 Michael Tilson Thomas
 SFS Media ② ③ SFS 0059 (83' • DDD)



Arriving just a little too late for inclusion in my comparative survey of *West Side*

Story recordings for BBC Radio 3's *Building a Library* (March 8), this complete account of Bernstein's beloved score may not have changed the outcome of my review but it would most certainly have enlivened the debate. So much of what Michael Tilson Thomas and his San Francisco Symphony Orchestra achieve here hits the spot; nowhere is casting wrong-headed (and we all know of whom I speak); and while the smell of theatre does not always permeate this live concert presentation, a sense of context, of the bigger picture, is most certainly apparent.

It might have helped to have added in a few more of the book's verbal exclamations – like the provocative 'Beat it!' which triggers the scrap in the opening 'Prologue' or some vocal sense of physical altercation in the 'Rumble', culminating as it does in the sound of police sirens and the ominous chiming of the clock but, more importantly, Tony's howl of 'Maria!', which is excluded here and present only in the super-complete

Jay Productions recording and the otherwise disappointing New Broadway Cast. I wonder, too, what point there is in including the 'Baiting of Anita' if you don't include the vocal abuse and her reaction to it – again the Jay Productions recording does. In short, the new MTT version can feel a bit divorced from the stage, a bit pristine, steam-cleaned. The 'Prologue', for instance, has great clarity and immediacy and is very slickly played but I miss a degree of physical abandon, of rawness, stridency, of the music being danced.

That said, when MTT lets his San Franciscans off the leash in the 'Mambo' and 'Jump' sections of the 'Dance at the Gym', they are smoking hot. Trumpets strafe the stratosphere in the former and a terrific kit drummer makes the dance break of 'Cool' really sizzle. No question that MTT leaves the composer's own version standing in both these numbers. Neither, though, can replicate the atmosphere of the Original Broadway Cast recording which (despite its incompleteness) conveys a vivid sense of the stage, of a cast revelling in the shock of newness, warts and all.

But immense care has gone into the preparation and presentation of this latest incarnation, and casting, as I say, is on the money. The Balcony scene 'Tonight' is about as good as it gets, with Cheyenne Jackson's fresh-voiced Tony and Alexandra Silber's Maria really nailing both dialogue (pitch-perfect) and number. He is idiomatic and engaged, and while he doesn't give us the high B flat in 'Maria' (I suspect he and MTT might have thought it too overtly 'operatic'), he does give us bags of ardour and intensity. Terrific. Silber is lovely, too, with more vocal colour than the average show (soubrette) soprano but never 'arch', never knowingly slipping into operatic mode.

Jessica Vosk's Anita has a tough act to follow in the great, the incomparable Chita Rivera. She remains in a class of her own with that unique way of making

the hurt and anger of 'A boy like that' sound like an extension of the dialogue. Vosk sings the song (well) but I don't get the heat of the moment from the very 'even' way in which the vocal is delivered. And 'America' – why so sedate of tempo, so 'proper'? Is this MTT striving for a more authentically Latino dance mode? Shouldn't there be a touch more vulgarity in the clash of cultures?

In all, though, pretty damn good, and the first serious challenger to the perhaps never to be surpassed Broadway original – and, more importantly for some, it's musically, if not quite dramatically, complete.

Edward Seckerson

Selected comparisons:

Broadway Orch, Bernstein (9/92) (DG)

457 199-2GH or 477 8853GB7

Nat SO, O Edwards (JAY) CDJAY2 1261

Original Broadway Cast, Goherman (SONY) SMK60724

New Broadway Cast, Vaccariello (SONY) 88697 52391-2

David

Lalla Roukh

Marianne Fiset *sop*.....Lalla Roukh
 Emiliano Gonzalez Toro *ten*.....Noureddin
 Nathalie Paulin *sop*.....Mirza
 Bernard Deletré *bass-bar*.....Baskir
 David Newman *bar*.....Bakbara
 Andrew Adelsberger *bass-bar*.....Kaboul

Opera Lafayette / Ryan Brown

Naxos ⑤ ② 8 660338/9 (107' • DDD • S)



Lalla Roukh (1862) was the fifth of the seven operas of

Félicien David, a French contemporary of Mendelssohn, born in 1810. It was his most successful piece, a fairy-tale fantasy set in the East, setting the pattern for other oriental operas by such composers as Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Delibes and Bizet. When the following year the young Bizet produced *The Pearl Fishers*, he was accused of copying David.

Before writing his two-act fantasy, the composer had in fact travelled in the

Middle East and had been captivated by its atmosphere. He took the plot of *Lalla Roukh* from a story by the Irish writer Thomas Moore (1779-1852), a friend of Lord Byron, telling of an Indian princess promised in marriage to the King of Bukhara who, on the way to meet him, is captivated by the singing of a minstrel. She falls in love and determines not to marry the king. But then it turns out that the minstrel is the king in disguise wanting to test his bride in advance, so all ends happily.

The big strength of this debut recording by Opera Lafayette of Washington DC is that all the principals have such firm, clear voices, very precise, with not a single wobbler among them. Marianne Fiset as the heroine has a bright, perfectly placed soprano, attacking even the most exposed notes with precision. She is matched by the lighter soprano of her companion, Mirza, sung by Nathalie Paulin, who copes superbly with the coloratura writing, clear and precise in everything, sweet and pure.

The tenor role of the hero Nouredin (alias the king) is sung by the tenor Emiliano Gonzalez Toro, again with a firm, clear voice. There remains the *buffo* character of Baskir, beautifully sung, with extremely clear diction in all his patter numbers. Add to that a couple of extra characters and an excellent chorus and you have a most attractive package, with each act complete on a single Naxos disc.

As presented there is no recitative, and I can only assume that any spoken dialogue is omitted – perfectly acceptable in such a novelty. One can simply sit back and enjoy a sequence of delightful numbers, notably Lalla's 'O nuit d'amour' at the start of Act 2, the charming if brief Romance of the hero and the ecstatic final solo for the heroine, exuberant in joy. The whole opera is rounded off with a march ensemble, again typical of the genre. Clear, atmospheric recording; a synopsis is provided in the booklet while the libretto may be found online.

Edward Greenfield

Hindemith

Tuttfantchen

Bele Kumberger *sop*..... Tuttfantchen
Herman Wallén *bass*..... Meister Tuttfant
Nora Lentner *sop*..... Trudel
Matthias Stier *ten*..... Peter
Annika Schlicht *mez*..... Mutter Berthe
Sebastian Bluth *bar*..... Punoni
Jan Gerrit Brüggemann *spkr*..... Narrator
Berlin Radio Choir; Deutsches Symphonie-
Orchester Berlin / Johannes Zurl
CPO © CPO777 802-2 (72' • DDD • T/I)



Hindemith's 'Christmas story in three scenes' has long been the Cinderella among his stage works, especially on disc. Although CPO does not explicitly claim this as a premiere recording, I am not aware of a previous one, although the concert suite for violin and small orchestra appeared a year or three back. The derivative scenario concerns the coming to life of the magic puppet of the title and his quest to find and rejoin the tree from which he was carved, in the process of which he steals the heart of his creator's daughter, Trudel, who is saved only at the last moment by the pupil, Peter.

Written explicitly with a children's audience in mind, one would expect the iconoclast composer of 1922 to have toned down his style but the extent to which he did so might well surprise those who have not encountered the music before. There are few overt pointers to the music's authorship, the style being a gentle pastiche of late Romanticism, with a Joplinsque 'foxtrot' for the puppets and a trio section the innocent ear might mistake for Carl Davis rather than the *enfant terrible* of *Santa Susanna* or the *Kammermusik*.

The full play is rendered here, in German, so there is a lot of spoken dialogue (on separate tracks) which is not reproduced in the booklet, though the sung texts are. The performance is beautifully prepared and sung by a cast who sound as if they had fun recording it. CPO's sound is excellent. **Guy Rickards**

Rameau

Castor et Pollux

Jeffrey Thompson *ten*..... Castor
Hadleigh Adams *bar*..... Pollux
Celeste Lazarenko *sop*..... Têlaire
Pascal Herington *ten*..... Mercure/Athlete
Margaret Plummer *mez*..... Phébé
Anna Fraser *sop*..... Cléone/Follower of Hébé/Spirit
Paul Goodwin-Groen *bass*..... Jupiter
Mark Donnelly *bar*..... High Priest
Cantillation; Orchestra of the Antipodes /
Antony Walker
Pinchgut Live © 2003 (139' • DDD)
Recorded live at City Recital Hall, Sydney,
December 6 & 8-10, 2012



We're fortunate to have recordings of both the original 1737 version of Rameau's

opera *Castor et Pollux* (with prologue) and the more often-performed 1754 version. Concentus Musicus Wien under Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Les Arts Florissants under William Christie chose the former, while the rather less well-subsidised English Bach Festival under Charles Farncombe (Erato, 2/83, 5/95 – nla) and now the Australian-based Pinchgut Opera under Antony Walker opted for the latter version. It's also worth mentioning the chamber version (Rameau's own arrangement) recorded by Musique des Lumières under Jean-Christophe Frisch (Auvidis Astrée, 7/98 – nla).

Stanley Sadie reviewed both the landmark CMW and EBF recordings in these pages. While praising the Farncombe interpretation, he thought it 'perhaps a little too English, a little too sober and unaffected, and thus not quite catching the vein of originality, or eccentricity, that is part of Rameau's musical personality'. While the EBF performed the 1754 version in London and Monaco, theirs was a studio recording (I should admit to having been a member of the orchestra), whereas Pinchgut Opera are recorded live, with the acoustical compromises that entails.

Pinchgut Opera, founded in 2002, nevertheless punches above its weight to judge by the palpable dramatic passion and pacing that characterise this performance (replete with occasional background stage noise and applause). Listening to these CDs is strangely akin to sitting in a seat with restricted view. Under Walker's direction, the instrumental and choral contributions from the Orchestra of the Antipodes and Cantillation are richly varied and stylish. Listeners without scores will find it annoying that the tracks and titles of the instrumental dances were omitted from the booklet.

The vocal soloists are young but already experienced, though some are better French Baroque stylists. Anna Fraser contributes lovely cameos in Acts 2 and 4, and in the title-roles both Jeffrey Thompson and Hadleigh Adams project moments of genuine nobility, although the live performance drew a more emotionally volatile performance from Thompson than intended. Certainly an over-reliance on vibrato to project detracts from Margaret Plummer's Phébé and Celeste Lazarenko's Têlaire while, against a stirring orchestral backdrop, Pascal Herington's Athlete struggles manfully with the melismas in the air that closes Act 2. Nevertheless, very enjoyable – and, unlike the EBF version, available on CD. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Selected comparisons:

Concentus Musicus Wien, Harnoncourt

(12/72⁸, 7/87⁸) (WARN) 2564 69730-8
Arts Florissants, Christie (7/93⁸) (HARM) HMA195 1501

Verdi

Don Carlo

José Carreras *ten*..... Don Carlo
 Mirella Freni *sop*..... Elisabetta di Valois
 Piero Cappuccilli *bar*..... Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa
 Agnes Baltsa *mez*..... Princess Eboli
 Ruggero Raimondi *bass-bar*..... Philip II
 Matti Salminen *bass*..... Grand Inquisitor
 Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera /
 Herbert von Karajan
 Orfeo (M) ③ C876 133D (172' • ADD)



This comes from the third of the four consecutive spring seasons that celebrated

Karajan's return to the Vienna State Opera more than a decade after his abrupt resignation. It has the same cast as the Berlin studio recording of 1978, with the exception of Raimondi's promotion – or transfer! – from inquisitor to monarch. As on that recording (which I haven't heard), Karajan adopts the four-act version of 1884; but that statement requires elaboration. According to the booklet-note, 'the confrontations between Carlos, Philip, Posa and Eboli interested [Karajan] more than the love between Carlos and Elisabeth'. As a result, the music for the frustrated lovers is pruned: out goes Carlo's delirium, Elisabeth loses a chunk of 'Tu che la vanità', and their parting duet suffers a huge cut of 67 bars. But that's not all: Eboli gets only one verse of her Veil song, as does Elisabeth in the farewell to her dismissed lady-in-waiting; and there are cuts too in the Auto-da-fé scene. One more caveat. The balance is mostly satisfactory but there are passages – the monks at the beginning, Carlo defending himself at the end – when the voices are almost inaudible. Contrariwise, the banda is so close as to make its music sound even more tawdry than usual.

If you can discount these drawbacks, you are actually left with a first-rate performance. Karajan galvanises the orchestra, the singers sound as if they are listening to one another and there are some beautifully floated soft phrases. It's a pity that Karajan didn't disallow Salminen's (admittedly mild) *crescendo* where, *piano pianissimo*, the Inquisitor demands the head of Posa, Philip's only friend. This scene takes a while to get going: the sinuous beginning lacks weight but the dialectical exchange between church and throne is gripping. Raimondi, softer-grained than

Christoff or Ghiaurov, does the king's loneliness very well. Cappuccilli, dangerously assertive in his duet with Philip, brings generous tone and exemplary breath control to Posa's dying words, while Carreras is absolutely thrilling when Carlo confronts his father at the auto-da-fé.

As recorded, Freni sounds rather squally on her top notes but she brings tenderness as well as passion to her impossible role as fiancée-turned-stepmother. And although Baltsa makes a predictably fiery Eboli, it's her confession of love rejected that is really moving. Now, for the second time of asking, may we please have the 1989 Vienna performance of the five-act version, conducted by Abbado? **Richard Lawrence**

Verdi

Macbeth

Simon Keenlyside *bar*..... Macbeth
 Latonia Moore *sop*..... Lady Macbeth
 Brindley Sherratt *bass*..... Banquo
 Gwyn Hughes Jones *ten*..... Macduff
 Ben Johnson *ten*..... Malcolm
 Elizabeth Llewellyn *sop*..... Lady-in-Waiting
 Opera in English Chorus; English National Opera
 Orchestra / Edward Gardner
 Chandos Opera in English (M) ② CHAN3180
 (160' • DDD • S/T)



This *Macbeth* is the 62nd and final opera recording in English to be supported by

Peter Moores – he started with the Goodall *Ring* and has been working in association with Chandos since 1995. In this case, no one collecting the series has any reason to hesitate: here is a very good cast, Edward Gardner draws vibrantly dramatic results from his English National Opera forces, the orchestral playing is excellent and the engineering is clear and clean.

Many more will want to hear the American soprano Latonia Moore's performance as Lady Macbeth: she is apparently unfazed by the role's difficulties and soars through her big numbers with plenty of luxurious, slightly smoky tone. It's extremely impressive as a vocal performance, and if the voice lacks the dagger-like edge one ideally wants, her Sleepwalking scene is hauntingly done. Simon Keenlyside, opposite her, doesn't command the richness of timbre and sheer vocal authority of a true Verdi baritone. He has the notes, though, and the performance cannot be faulted for integrity and commitment, and benefits from his experience of the role in the opera house.

Further advantages are Brindley Sherratt's noble, sonorous Banquo and Gwyn Hughes Jones's ardent, sweet-toned Macduff. The smaller roles are all well filled. Gardner's conducting has some electric moments and he conjures up the necessary mixture of threat and grandeur throughout. He also manages to sustain interest in the rip-roaring Act 3 ballet (the text used is that of the 1865 Paris revision but the set also includes the original final scene as an appendix). The Opera in English Chorus is on moving, concentrated form in 'Patria oppressa' (or 'Land of torture, land of terror' as it is here), and the Witches' choruses are full of character, even if some of the words can't help getting garbled.

Jeremy Sams's translation opts for sensible clarity and comprehensibility and is not without its poetic touches, but Piave and Maffei's approximation of Shakespeare isn't done many favours by being brought back into the Bard's own tongue, where it can sound distinctly prosaic. In sum, though, this set represents a fine culmination to Moores's project. **Hugo Shirley**

Wagner

Parsifal

Jonas Kaufmann *ten*..... Parsifal
 Peter Mattel *bar*..... Amfortas
 René Pape *bass*..... Gurnemanz
 Katarina Dalayman *sop*..... Kundry
 Evgeny Nikitin *bass-bar*..... Klingsor
 Róni Brattaberg *bass*..... Titirel
 Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera,
 New York / Daniele Gatti

Stage director **François Girard**

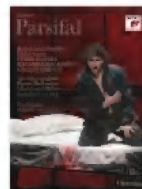
Video director **Barbara Willis Sweete**

Sony Classical (M) ② DVD 88883 72558-9;

(F) ② 88883 72572-9 (4h 40' • NTSC • 16:9 •

DD5.1 & LPCM stereo • O • S)

Recorded live 2013



In some respects this is a traditional *Parsifal*, with spears, a chalice, a grave for Titirel, a bed for

Kundry's attempted seduction of the hero. But producer François Girard places such details in a postmodern context. First he launches the drama as if it were a rehearsal rather than the real thing, with Gurnemanz and the knights in white shirts and slacks. Then he downplays aspects that could be more naturalistic – like the pastoral idyll of the Good Friday scene – while exaggerating elements which Wagner himself presented with relative restraint; the



Pacing and passion: Antony Walker conducts Pinchgut Opera in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, a 'rich, varied and stylish' performance

flowing and staining effects of blood in Act 2, for example.

Significant details are inevitably lost when a darkly lit production using the full dimensions of the Metropolitan Opera stage is viewed on a small screen. I was impressed by the austere grandeur of some episodes, alienated by the abstractions elsewhere – especially in the ceremonial scenes that end Acts 1 and 3, where the vagueness of the terrain risks neutralising the impact of the enacted rituals, with their focus on Amfortas's physical agonies. This uneasy mix – reinforcing the obvious while side-stepping certain essentials – also transfers to the musical dimension.

Daniele Gatti has sometimes been accused of failing to access the proper pace and inner life of Wagner's score; his laborious slowing down for the Act 1 transition music illustrates the problem. But there are compensations. The orchestral sound is consistently rich and resonant, and the singing is – without exception – mesmerisingly in tune with the production's highly stylised ritualism. The impassioned intensity Jonas Kaufmann brings to Parsifal's music is matched by the rhetorical conviction of Peter Mattei's Amfortas and Evgeny Nikitin's Klingsor, and complemented by the warmer qualities

of Katarina Dalayman's Kundry and René Pape's Gurnemanz. Nevertheless, it is as if the opera's much-vaunted notions of compassion and redemption are being coolly appraised rather than vigorously affirmed or contradicted. This is very much Wagner for the 21st century. **Arnold Whittall**

Wagner

Siegfried

Lance Ryan *ten* Siegfried
 Terje Stensvold *bar* Wanderer
 Nina Stemme *sop* Brünnhilde
 Peter Bröndler *ten* Mime
 Johannes Martin Kränzle *bar* Alberich
 Anna Larsson *contr* Erda
 Alexander Tsymbalyuk *bass-bar* Fafner
 Rinnat Moriah *sop* Woodbird
 Orchestra of La Scala, Milan / Daniel Barenboim

Stage director **Guy Cassiers**

Video director **Patrizia Carmine**

ArtHaus (F) (2) DVD 101 695; (F) Blu-ray 108 092

(4h 13' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S)

Recorded live, October 2012

Wagner

Götterdämmerung

Irène Theorin *sop* Brünnhilde
 Lance Ryan *ten* Siegfried
 Mikhail Petrenko *bass* Hagen

Johannes Martin Kränzle *bar* Alberich
 Gerd Grochowski *bass-bar* Gunther
 Anna Samuil *sop* Guttrune
 Waltraud Meier *mez* Waltraute
 Aga Mikolaj *sop* Woglinde
 Maria Gortsevskaia *mez* Wellgunde
 Anna Lapkovskaja *mez* Flosshilde
 Orchestra of La Scala, Milan / Daniel Barenboim

Stage director **Guy Cassiers**

Video director **Patrizia Carmine**

ArtHaus (F) (2) DVD 101 696; (F) Blu-ray 108 093

(4h 52' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S)

Recorded live, June 2013



Daniel Barenboim's celebration of the Wagner bicentenary culminated in the completion of a new *Ring* cycle, produced by Guy Cassiers, mounted in Berlin and Milan, and given a concert staging at the BBC Proms. These DVDs of La Scala performances, combining the October 2012 *Siegfried* with the June 2013 *Götterdämmerung*, are most notable for showcasing this conductor's supreme

command of the epic lyricism that goes to the heart of the Wagner style; and while some might regret the absence of the Staatskapelle Berlin, whose playing was a highlight of the Proms performances, the La Scala orchestra has no weak links either.

Barenboim's flair for drawing out often under-characterised details, as with the string-writing in the *Götterdämmerung* funeral music, is one outstanding feature. Even more important is his melding of space and time to ensure that the full eloquence of the musical drama can be conveyed without exaggeration or treading water. I don't think I've ever heard less episodic accounts of the immense structures of *Siegfried's* third act or the first act of *Götterdämmerung*. So, even when reservations about singing, staging and filming are all factored in, this is an absorbing portrait of a fine Wagner conductor at the height of his powers.

Cassiers's production is rather artful in combining quite traditional demands on the singers with a setting that employs simple structures – representing Mime's forge, Brünnhilde's rock, the Gibichung's hall, and so on – against a high-tech background of projections that mix abstract and naturalistic images for reasons which the booklet-notes attempt to explain. Viewed on a small screen, there's an element of neither one thing nor the other about this but, given the musical virtues, the setting contributes enough atmosphere to the staging to be acceptable in its own terms. The film technique of frequently fading out singers to show some of the set before fading them in again takes some getting used to but can't be rated a serious drawback, irritating though it is in places.

As for the singers: there's the considerable plus of a pair of Brünnhildes, Nina Stemme and Irène Theorin, whose sumptuous voices serve both the human and mythic aspects of the drama to admirable effect. Anna Larsson as Erda and Waltraud Meier as Waltraute are no less memorable in their smaller roles. Much of the focus is on Lance Ryan's Siegfried, aggressively saturnine rather than naively jovial, and even more prone to project harshly in the second opera than the first: in this context, the more intimate declamatory style he finds for Siegfried's final narration is gratifying and shows that he can call on something more than mere stamina in delivering these punishingly demanding roles. No disappointments with the other male singers – just a pity that the producer has Hagen address the audience rather than the vassals assembled behind him in *Götterdämmerung* Act 2. This underlines

that while Cassiers achieves an uneasy compromise between tradition and innovation, Barenboim provides a masterclass in Wagner interpretation that need fear no comparison with the greatest of his precursors. **Arnold Whittall**

'Amor'

Delibes Lakmé – Bell Song **Flotow** Martha – Letzte Rose; Zum treuen Freunde geh **Gounod** Roméo et Juliette – Ah! Je veux vivre **Handel** Rinaldo – Lascia ch'io pianga **Mozart** Don Giovanni – Vedrai, carino. Die Entführung aus dem Serail – Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – When I am laid in earth **R Strauss** Amor, Op 68 No 5 **Telemann** Germanicus – Rimembranza crudel **Weber** Der Freischütz – Einst träumte meiner sel'gen Base
Marie Friederike Schöder *sop* **Vogtland**
Philharmonic Orchestra, Greiz-Reichenbach / Stefan Fraas

Ars Produktion (P) ARS38 144 (57' • DDD/DSD)



Though her career is still in the emerging stage, with plenty of credits in smaller-city

opera houses and major-city early-music groups, Marie Friederike Schöder is, from the sounds of this disc, a fully finished vocal personality, somewhat comparable to Lucia Aliberti, with a meticulously controlled vibrato and an incredibly clear-etched vocal line. Her degree of control allows her great freedom of ornamental invention in Handel's 'Lascia ch'io pianga' and fairly esoteric trill effects in Telemann's *Germanicus*, and gives the illusion of a life literally fading away in Purcell's *Dido* (even if, perhaps due to conductor Stefan Fraas's slowish tempo, the characterisation doesn't yet break one's heart).

In some of the more traditional repertoire, one could wish she didn't keep such a lid on her voice, which she opens up occasionally and with great effect. The strong sense of meaning she gives especially to German texts – in the *Der Freischütz* aria, for example – is hugely appreciated. At her considerable best, there's a welcome sense of integration. High notes are small but grow seamlessly out of the rest of the voice. Words shape notes, even in tune-driven arias such as the *Roméo et Juliette* waltz. What's around her (such as the viola interplay in *Der Freischütz*) is duly acknowledged. How she actually sounds in the opera house is another matter. But what's here on disc – in first-class SACD sound with solid orchestral support – is definitely enough to inspire Amor.

David Patrick Stearns

'L'Amour'

Adam Le postillon de Lonjumeau – Mes amis, écoutez l'histoire **Berlioz** Les Troyens – O blonde Cérés **Bizet** La jolie fille de Perth – Elle est là...A la voix d'un amant fidèle **Boïeldieu** La Dame blanche – Oh, quel plaisir d'être soldat!; Viens, gentille dame **Delibes** Lakmé – Prendre le dessin d'un bijou...Fantaisie, aux divins mensonges **Donizetti** La Favorite – Un ange, une femme inconnue **Gounod** Roméo et Juliette – L'amour, l'amour...Ah, lève-toi soleil **Massenet** Werther – O Nature, pleine de grace; Toute mon âme... Pourquoi me réveiller **Offenbach** La Belle Héloïse – Au mont Ida **A Thomas** Mignon – Oui, je veux par le monde

Juan Diego Flórez *ten* **Sergey Artamonov** *bass*
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale, Bologna / Roberto Abbado
Decca (P) 478 5948DH (64' • DDD)



This recital from Juan Diego Flórez marks a new departure into different areas of

19th-century French repertoire. But the voice, despite having recently bulked out a little, essentially remains a bright, light (and sometimes a little tight) lyric instrument, famously flexible and free at the top but still with a somewhat limited timbral range – something emphasised when, as here, it is closely recorded.

As such, the more wistful, gentle numbers, where the tenor's musicality shines through and the voice is allowed to relax, struck me as the most enjoyable. The main part of the Serenade from Bizet's opera – more Provence than Perth in feel, admittedly – is sung with touching gentleness; Iopas's glorious 'O blonde Cérés' from *Les Troyens* is a delight but even here there could be a little more light and shade. The sprightlier numbers are a lot of fun, the first Boïeldieu aria (capped with a ringing top D) and the Adam in particular; the final hushed phrase of the *Dame blanche* aria is meltingly done, too. He's on something like home ground with the Donizetti scene, which is securely and cleanly sung.

The main interest, however, probably lies in the two arias from *Werther*, an opera Flórez is due to tackle in the theatre in a couple of years' time. He sings them with characteristic elegance but I can't imagine this – or Gounod's Roméo – is ever going to be anything like a natural fit, and he relies on the engineering to save him from getting swallowed up by the orchestra (decently conducted throughout) in the climaxes.

Hugo Shirley

GRAMOPHONE *Reissues*

PAVAROTTI: THE FIRST DECADE

Mike Ashman delves into Decca's sumptuous new box collating the great tenor's first 10 years of recording, 50 years after his first disc was made



Early talent: Pavarotti had that 'magical tingle factor' even before he hit the headlines

Seven years after the tenor's death, Decca launches a belated full-scale tribute. We are some way here from the later stadium star who shared stages with Sting and Bono (not to mention his Three Tenors colleagues for numerous World Cups), who attempted to conquer Hollywood with the movie *Yes, Giorgio* and whose large brow-mopping handkerchief became familiar enough to be parodied on Russ Abbot's Saturday-night TV comedy show in Britain.

For this 'first decade', as Decca has named it, matters were simpler and less frenetic. Often heard here in partnership with Joan Sutherland, Pavarotti was just a young singer: to quote from James Jolly's booklet essay, 'a lyric tenor – agile, flexible, light, sweet, bright, wonderfully "open" and beautiful, [who] had that magical "tingle factor"'. Four central tenor roles...formed the core of his repertoire – Alfredo, the Duke of Mantua, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Rodolfo. The booklet points out that the singer who inspired Pavarotti in this first clutch of repertoire was the Swede Jussi Björling, also noted for his 'heart-felt singing' and '[not] a stage animal, [although] both could paint with their voices'.

Therein lies some of the rub. That's a very nice description of the voice and nobody but the meanest (and deafest) grouch would deny the sheer beauty and point of the vocalism caught here in, say,

Donizetti's Tonio or (more dramatically) in Puccini's Calaf. The now clichéd adjective 'Italianate' is crying out to be attached by default setting to that bright, forward sound. (If you want a poetic appreciation of those of the singer's qualities, look back in *Gramophone* to John Steane's 'Pavarotti and Us' of October 1997 or his 2007 obituary tribute.) But, to borrow from a once familiar lyric, is that all there is? And do we in fact get any painting with the voice?

Marilyn Horne wrote diplomatically at the time of the tenor's death that, although he didn't very often look like the characters he was playing onstage, he often sounded like them. We may project the unsophisticated innocence of Nemorino to sound something like Pavarotti in this 1970 *Elisir* recording but, as soon as that aria ('Una furtiva lagrima') heaves into view, he tends to move into a tone of *slancio*-driven Puccinian tragedy, shades of the stadium years to come. Yes, of course it brought the houses down but, if you compare the efforts of those other Two Tenors, you hear there also the stage drama of a shocked young man beyond his comfort zone, called up for military service at the risk of losing both homeland and love. Pavarotti can do sad but he is unfailingly (and here not relevantly) heroic. Similarly, when having to deal with recitative-like passages (not a regular occurrence in his repertoire), this tenor

often sounds like he's waiting for the next big moment. Try the repeated 'Chi son?' in Rodolfo's 'Che gelida manina' – is he thinking, or is he embarrassed by telling this girl he's a poet? With Pavarotti, even under Karajan and opposite his long-term close colleague Mirella Freni, we don't quite know.

Another less interesting tendency – OK, it *is* partly the repertoire – is that all Pavarotti's characters are 'good' guys. His Act 3 Rodolfo is neither immature nor selfish when he (lazily or stressedly, both are playable) dismisses Mimi as a 'slut'. His Duke of Mantua, in keeping with (granted) an unfailingly noble and un-dark reading of the score by Richard Bonyngue, is a cheeky, naughty boy at most, not a casual rapist misusing his power. Play Alfredo Kraus anywhere in the role to hear charming but undoubtedly dangerous evil in singing of matching beauty. Similarly, Pavarotti's Pinkerton shows a touching repentance in Act 3 – the poor boy just got his women mixed up when he went home on leave.

However, much praise where praise is due. The strongest sets reissued here are those where a firm musico-dramatic line has been taken – the Bonyngue *Fille du régiment* taken effectively straight off the Covent Garden stage, the Karajan Puccini, and the Mehta *Turandot*, where Pavarotti manages clearly to encompass both the passion and remorse of Calaf. Fearless vocal commitment takes him into a more exciting zone than rival versions with Carreras and Domingo. Here is singing we can call great without resorting to lazy modern hype.

The 96kHz/24 bit remasterings sound fine – there was not too much wrong in the first place – but, as with its Solti tribute of last year, Decca has been a little stingy with rare or historic extras to boost the tenor's catalogue, and inconsistent with disc allocation (the Solti Verdi Requiem, a single disc on the 'Decca Sound' box, is here back to two). We get the (slightly augmented) early recital discs and an 'In Concert' compilation, some first-time live excerpts from Pavarotti's *Bobème* debut (Reggio Emilia, 1961) and the first EP of arias that he later asked to be withdrawn. Pas beaucoup – but hopefully there will be more live treats on later volumes. **G**



THE RECORDING

'Luciano Pavarotti Edition 1:
The First Decade'

Decca (27 discs)
478 5946DH27

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Great voices of the last century

Priceless recordings of a trio of remarkable singers from the 1930s to the 1950s

Last year marked the 125th anniversary of the great German soprano **Lotte Lehmann's** birth but Music & Arts' handsome four-disc tribute to her has only just reached these shores. I say 'four-disc', but you could justifiably claim that the set's highlight is a quite magnificent CD-ROM that features a hugely engaging and informative biography of Lehmann by Beaumont Glass, including nuggets of information that I for one knew nothing about – love letters between Lehmann and Toscanini, for example, who 'struck fire together'. I knew about the fire but not about the letters.

There are countless photographs and various 'first release' tracks, as well as items previously released only on either deleted commercial LPs or pirate 'vinyl' that has long vanished. Glass's biographical work, as well as producer Gary Hickling's commentary on the tracks themselves, the sources, accompanying artists and actual interpretations, are models of what

'A beautiful woman and a beautiful singer, Novotná was a vocal aristocrat'

one needs with 'historic' sets such as this. A slim leaflet slipped into the set gives you the basics, repertoire-wise – a full track listing that attaches asterisks to the items that are 'previously unissued in any format'.

The repertoire is mostly – though not exclusively – familiar Lehmann territory, superb Wolf and mixed Lieder from 1938, recordings from 1941 which are virtually as good (the sensually expressive voice still in admirable shape), and similar repertoire recorded between 1943 and

1949, which, although Lehmann's vocal projection had suffered some decline, is still good enough to carry her matchless artistry. Each track is an object lesson in the art of sensitive singing, which Lehmann herself briefly speaks about towards the end of the fourth disc. The last song of all, Wolf's entrancing 'Gesang Weylas' (recorded in 1941), has a particular significance for her but I'll leave you to investigate why. The transfers are mostly excellent.

Two further releases centring on a similar vocal vintage beg serious consideration. VAI Audio's programme of 'Live Broadcast Performances 1944-1951' devoted to the African American contralto **Marian Anderson**, 'a rich, vibrant contralto of intrinsic beauty', to quote the late Alan Blyth, is another gem. In 1939 the Daughters of the American Revolution refused Anderson permission to sing to an integrated audience in Constitution Hall. The incident threw her into the international spotlight on a level virtually unknown for a classical musician. With the aid of First Lady Eleanor and Franklin D Roosevelt, Anderson performed an acclaimed open-air concert on Easter Sunday 1939 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. She sang before a crowd of more than 75,000 people and a radio audience in the millions.

Anderson's official discography is hardly sizeable, which makes this heartfelt programme of radio recordings especially valuable. The repertoire: Handel, Verdi, Bellini and various songs (Lieder and spirituals), including Sibelius and, before that, a spoken tribute to the composer on his 86th birthday. Also included is Saint-Saëns's 'Mon coeur

s'ouvre à ta voix' (*Samson et Dalila*), not 'Softly Awakes my Heart', as it was on my much-prized plum-label 78.

One of my favourite singers of the period is **Jarmila Novotná**, the noted Czech soprano whose appearances at the New York Met have been documented on various live recordings. Some appear in excerpt on Supraphon's generous 'Opera Recital', which includes numerous 'first appearances on CD': *The Tales of Hoffmann* under Beecham, *Don Giovanni* under Walter (with Ezio Pinza and Alexander Kipnis), *La traviata* under Ettore Panizza (with Jan Peerce) and *Tosca* with Wilfred Pelletier conducting. A famous Victor recording of Vendulka's lovely aria from Smetana's opera *The Kiss*, often reissued, is a highlight and the selection concludes with a private 1956 tape of Rusalka's 'Song to the Moon', the voice still in remarkable shape. A beautiful woman and a beautiful singer, Novotná was a vocal aristocrat, her tone radiant and unforced, her presence, even on records, formidable. The transfers are extremely good.

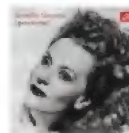
THE RECORDINGS



Various Cpsrs  
125th Birthday Tribute
Lotte Lehmann
Music & Arts (M) (S)
(4 CDs + CD-ROM) CD1279



Various Cpsrs
Live Broadcast Performances
1944-1951
Marian Anderson
VAI Audio (M) VAI1275



Various Cpsrs
Opera Recital
Jarmila Novotná
Supraphon (M) SU4158-2



Soprano Lotte Lehmann, who sang more than 90 different operatic roles during her long career

Walter's Mozart

Bruno Walter said that no conductor should tackle Mozart's Symphony No 40 until reaching the age of 50. He was in his early fifties when he made his first recording of the work, with the Staatskapelle Berlin, a 1929 recording recently reissued by Opus Kura alongside Walter's pre-war recordings of the other two 'late' symphonies. To be truthful, the evidence suggests that even by then Walter hadn't quite levelled with the work's pathos and sense of tragedy. Only the finale seems to generate the requisite level of musical tension. Best of the three, to my ears, is the glorious BBC SO version of No 39 (1934), the opening quintessential Walter in its affectionately drawn phrasing, with tempi shifting virtually by the bar but so much expression. Truly this is the product of a bygone era.

One might have expected the Vienna Philharmonic *Jupiter* of 1938 to level with it but it doesn't, quite. Only the slow movement seems to reflect Walter's deeply expressive norm, but the first movement lacks edge and the last two a certain impetus, the finale especially, where the trumpets are initially reticent and the overall impression suggests elevated routine. Compare the live VPO Mahler Ninth from the same year (admittedly recorded under extraordinary circumstances) and you begin to realise that with Walter there is no definable chronological pattern to his recording achievements. His great recordings could be from the early, middle or late phases of his career. Very good transfers.

THE RECORDING



Mozart Syms Nos 39-41
BBC SO; Staatskapelle Berlin;
VPO / Bruno Walter
Opus Kura © OPK2107

Dutch master restored

Previously available on Philips, the Dutch conductor **Paul van Kempen's** thrilling Tchaikovsky recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra hark back to the heady days of his compatriot Willem Mengelberg, without quite resorting to Mengelberg's dazzling array of recreative mannerisms. But some do remain: for example, towards the end of the Fifth Symphony, the clinching held chord just before the coda where both Mengelberg and van Kempen tweak the harmony so that it's unresolved and therefore staves off any potential 'premature congratulation'. Both conductors also cut the finale. The playing is mostly marvellous, as for example in the *Pathétique* Symphony, where sudden bursts of passion tug at the heartstrings (ie 7'26" into the first movement), and the third movement is pointed and incisive but not too fast.

Van Kempen had a keenly attentive ear and wasn't afraid to push for a fast flow of adrenaline. *Marche slave* is extraordinary both in terms of its virtuosity (superb trumpets) and in the way the swiftly paced climaxes mount with maximum tension. But why the disruptive hiatus at 4'27"? *Capriccio italien* features heraldic brass-playing and a fiery coda, and *Romeo and Juliet* again

suggests a Mengelbergian template, with fierce rushing strings and punchy accents. I like the way van Kempen broadens the tempo before the return of the duel scene and the knife-edge attack of the strings when they return. The intensified love music also places most modern rivals in the shade. This is a prime example of a studio recording that sounds live. The *1812* Overture receives a well-structured reading, where the various episodes dovetail without any jolting tempo changes. The sound quality is mostly excellent for its early 1950s vintage, though be warned that you might, like me, acquire a copy that has the labels printed the wrong way round. Excellent notes by James Svejda.

THE RECORDING



Tchaikovsky Orch Wks
Concertgebouw Orch /
Paul van Kempen
Decca Eloquence
© 2 480 8536

A vintage procession down the Appian Way

Pending a further collection of Mercury releases from Universal, it's been left to the likes of Pristine Classical and the **Antal Dorati** Centenary Society to search out various recordings that have not as yet made it to CD. One that has quite blown me away is a Respighi triple-bill, the *Pines* and *Fountains of Rome* plus *Church Windows*, which Pristine has also reissued (2/10). The highlight is *The Pines of Rome*, a 1952 recording that for mounting excitement in 'The Pines of the Appian Way' unexpectedly outclasses Dorati's stereo remake from 1960 (Mercury, 2/91). It is also significantly slower. Beam up 14'17", where the Appian Way steals in as 'The Pines of the Janiculum' fade from view, and the feeling of tension sets in right from the start. The stereo version of the finale is more finely detailed in more consistently upfront sound, and more consciously studio-bound, with a tendency to speed up as the movement progresses. You also hear a good deal more of the tam-tam. The Society's transfers are perfectly serviceable, a good deal better in fact than some others I have heard from this source.

THE RECORDING



Respighi Orch Wks
Minneapolis SO / Antal Dorati
Dorati Edition © ADE035
dorati-society.org.uk

Books



Jeremy Nicholas on the troubled life and career of John Ogdon:

'This is perhaps the most riveting, intimate and revealing biography of a musician I have read'



Arnold Whittall reviews a companion to the symphony:

'Horton's team of 16 writers works hard to show how the symphony was born and why it has not (yet) died'

Piano Man: A Life of John Ogdon

By Charles Beauchlerk

Simon & Schuster, HB, 432pp, £20

ISBN 978-0-85720-011-2



Had he lived, John Ogdon would have turned 77 this year. Had he not gone mad, there is no reason to suppose that he would not still be playing concerts and composing. As it is, he died aged 52 a quarter of a century ago, a mental and physical wreck.

His brief, glorious career when he was hailed as the most outstanding pianist Britain had ever produced lasted a mere 11 years. The last decade and a half of his life was spent in and out of psychiatric units on a diet of cigarettes and high doses of lithium to curb his unpredictable mood swings and violent behaviour. Such a spectacular trajectory might furnish the material for a novel and, indeed, the Ogdon story as dramatised in the 1989 TV film *Virtuoso* starring Alfred Molina made good viewing (it was based on the book of the same title ghostwritten for Brenda Lucas Ogdon and which the present volume now firmly replaces). But this is non-fiction – someone's real life – and one may justifiably ask whether our fascination with such tragedy is merely unsavoury prurient curiosity.

It says something for the skill of Charles Beauchlerk that these reservations never surface in a compelling narrative that, though it might read like a novel, never descends to sentimentality or sensationalism. He doesn't pull his punches yet is commendably even-handed. Beauchlerk, a lifelong friend from prep school of Ogdon's son Richard, is neither a musicologist nor a specialist pianophile (his previous books are a biography of his ancestor Nell Gwyn and a book on Shakespeare), though his love and wide knowledge of music is self-evident. *Piano*

Man benefits, I think, from this objectivity. An elegant prose stylist, he can draw on classical and literary allusions, and not hamper the pace (nor tax the patience of the non-pianophile) with endless reviews and lists of what, when and where Ogdon played – though the extent of the repertoire referred to in the 394 pages of text is simply mind-boggling.

Beauchlerk's research has been assiduous and all-embracing, revealing many aspects of a life and career that have never been made public before. The bare outlines are well known. Born in January 1937, Ogdon studied at what is now the Royal Northern College of Music. He made his BBC Proms and Wigmore Hall debuts in 1959. The following year saw his first recording (for HMV) and his marriage to the pianist Brenda Lucas. Two years later he was declared joint winner with Vladimir Ashkenazy of the Tchaikovsky Competition. Already known for his staggering ability to sight-read, absorb and memorise the most complex scores, a hectic international career followed and with it the concomitant material rewards. By 1968, Brenda and this gentle giant who lived only for music were living in a five-storey house overlooking Regent's Park with two housekeepers, a nanny, a secretary and a part-time chef and chauffeur.

Then, after a series of psychotic episodes that began in 1971, Ogdon suffered a nervous breakdown in the autumn of 1973, a victim of the schizophrenia that had also afflicted his father. The next year he tried to kill himself three times, the final attempt by slitting his throat. After a period of recuperation he was well enough to take up a teaching post at the University of Indiana in 1976 but from which he was dismissed in 1980, still clearly very ill. He returned to the concert platform; but due to the amount of anti-psychotic drugs he was obliged to take in order to control his behaviour, Ogdon was unable thereafter to play consistently to the standard that had made him a household name.

Beauchlerk charts the extreme highs and lows with myriad verbatim and written

accounts from all those involved with the careers and social life of the Ogdons during their rocky time together. It is their relationship that is the central theme of the book and it is greatly to Brenda Ogdon's credit that she has allowed this not uncritical account of it to be laid bare. 'In a way,' Beauchlerk ventures, 'she was Salieri to John's Mozart, only they happened to be married.' Their *folie de grandeur*, poor career decisions and financial irresponsibility are all held up for inspection. One anecdote rather sums it all up: in 1980, a friend who had raised £250 for the near-destitute John to live on was advised to entrust the money to Brenda rather than John as he wouldn't have known what to do with it. Brenda went straight to Harrods and bought herself a fur coat. 'What could I have done with £250,' she said in self-justification, 'when we owe £30,000?'

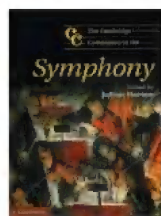
This is perhaps the most riveting, intimate and revealing biography of a musician I have read. It is certainly the most tragic. My one criticism is that the book's cover gives less prominence to Beauchlerk and Ogdon than to the ubiquitous Stephen Fry and his inevitable encomium. **Jeremy Nicholas**

The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony

Edited by Julian Horton

Cambridge University Press, PB, 466pp, £19.99

ISBN 978-0-521-71195-1



In North American conversation, 'the Symphony' is as likely to reference an orchestra and its performance space as a particular type of musical composition, and the special status of the term is reinforced by the worldwide tendency to include it within the names of leading orchestras on all continents. Symphony orchestras are prestigious institutions not least because they perform



John Ogdon working on Gerard Schurmann's Piano Concerto with the composer in 1973

symphonies, and the parallelism between the evolution of the symphony concert during the 18th and 19th centuries and the transformation of symphonic composition from the relatively modest frame employed by Sammartini and Stamitz into the grand designs of Bruckner and Mahler is a familiar topic in myriad music histories.

Putting together this Companion, Julian Horton hasn't been tempted to mirror the monolithically symmetrical 'birth to death' scenario found, for example, in Tippett's *Symphony No 4*. While not denying the basic chronologies – Classical, Romantic, modernist: diatonic, chromatic, post-tonal – he opts for a sequence of narratives that play off consideration of the symphony as musical structure against appreciation of the phenomenon as something performed; something whose character responds to specific cultural opportunities and stimuli, changes in the nature of musical instruments and the dimensions of the orchestra, the emergence of the public concert and the various forms of music dissemination that have occurred alongside the live event.

Horton's team of 16 writers works hard to show how the symphony was born and why it has not (yet) died. They make a particular point of looking beyond the greatest and most familiar masters (all male) of the genre, while also attempting to devise unhackneyed portraits of those masters, all within the remit of carrying the general reader along while not affronting the specialist. The editor himself occupies the book's centre ground with 77 pages outlining in broad, basic technical terms the intensifying polarity between synthesis and fragmentation in symphonies from Schubert to Mahler. Opinions will inevitably vary on the usefulness of his eight-page table of cyclical tonal schemes in 163 symphonies composed between 1800 and 1911. But this database certainly encapsulates the ambition of the enterprise as historically comprehensive as well as ideologically committed.

Before Horton's chapters, you can take in well-researched accounts of the genre from its origins to Beethoven, then a pair of wide-ranging surveys detailing what has happened to it since the 1820s.

The first of these, by David Brodbeck, has the title 'The symphony after Beethoven after Dahlhaus', signalling the surprisingly prominent position allotted to a musicologist alongside a composer. Some specialists might be exercised by Brodbeck's selective and unsympathetic account of Carl Dahlhaus's thinking; more a demonstration of that scepticism about their European peers found in some regions of American musicology than a persuasive context for the chapter's post-Beethovenian theme. After Brodbeck, *Gramophone's* David Fanning provides a less captious, more convincing trawl through the turbulent waters of symphonic music since Mahler. There are many vivid insights: for example, 'Nielsen and Sibelius stand head and shoulders above their symphonic contemporaries because they not only asked fundamental questions of the symphony and its idealist conceptions but also proposed hard-won solutions that neither leant on the crutches of delusion nor represented a lowering of sights'. Then, a little later on, 'The fine line Shostakovich treads between utopia and dystopia, euphoria and terror, is one reason why his Fourth Symphony feels like the most exciting and authentic symphonic document of its decade' – just the kind of clear and committed thinking needed in books of this kind.

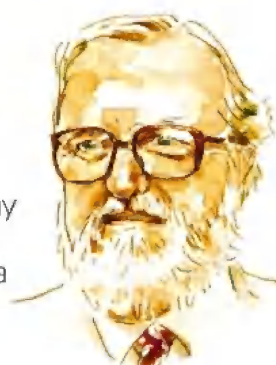
It's not easy to find fresh things to say about the symphony's early years and its rapid advance with Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven but Michael Spitzer, Simon P Keefe and Mark Anson-Cartwright are not daunted by the vast amount of expert commentary they need to acknowledge. Richard Will's discussion of 'The symphony and the classical orchestra' is equally well judged. When it comes to more modern times, the relatively restricted focus of Pauline Fairclough's look at the situation of the symphony in early Soviet Russia and Daniel M Grimley's choice of just five works – by Sibelius, Stravinsky, Berio, Carter and Gudmundsen-Holmgreen – to frame his interpretation of formal strategies found since 1900 work better than those more general chapters whose arguments are more routine. But there's an appropriately stirring coda, 'The symphony, the modern orchestra and the performing canon', which Alan Street launches with the 2011 Kansas City premiere of the *American Symphony* by one Adam Schoenberg (no relation to the more famous Arnold). It's a good way of suggesting why this long-lived, supremely adaptable genre isn't likely to vanish any time soon.

Arnold Whittall

Classics RECONSIDERED



Gavin Dixon and Tully Potter discuss the finer points of Rudolf Barshai's recording of Shostakovich's Symphony No 13, 'Babi Yar', with the WDR Symphony Orchestra



Shostakovich

Symphony No 13

Sergei Alexashkin bass Choral Academy Moscow; WDR SO, Cologne / **Rudolf Barshai** Brilliant Classics © 11 6324

A Brilliant Classics Rudolf Barshai symphony set finds the WDR Symphony Orchestra in persuasive form, and with the added intensity of his approach a defining factor. At around £20, this is a rare bargain.

Richard Whitehouse (7/06)

With the disappearance of the Melodiya catalogue (at least in the UK), seekers after

truth – or at least some measure of authenticity – in their Shostakovich symphonies will have to look elsewhere. One option is to investigate the recordings made outside Russia by musicians closely associated with the composer. These include Kurt Sanderling in East Berlin, Mstislav Rostropovich in Washington and London, and Maxim Shostakovich in Prague.

Rudolf Barshai certainly qualifies for inclusion in this select group. The founding viola player of the Borodin Quartet and only begotter of the Moscow

Chamber Orchestra, he is the man who amplified Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet into the much-performed Chamber Symphony. He also directed the first performances (live and in the studio) of Shostakovich's Symphony No 14. Certain musicians seem to have found him more pernickety than inspirational, but Sviatoslav Richter praised his honesty and professionalism, refuting 'the usual view that he's incapable of conducting anything other than chamber music'. Now, belatedly, cult status has arrived.

David Gutman (7/02)

Gavin Dixon At less than 20 years of age, the Barshai/WDR SO Shostakovich cycle may seem a young candidate for 'classic' status but the high praise and many awards it has received suggest it deserves the accolade. The secrets of its success: a top-flight Western orchestra working with one of the great conductors of the late Soviet era, who had been a close friend of Shostakovich.

Tully Potter Barshai managed to infuse his German orchestra with the feelings that he brought out of the Soviet Union, all those years of having to make music under a repressive regime, and all his experience of working with Shostakovich, going right back to 1947.

GD All the symphonies in the cycle are good but the Thirteenth stands out. Barshai seems to have had a personal investment in this work. The controversial premiere of the symphony, and also the events that it commemorates, were still vivid memories.

TP It was very controversial, in the Soviet context, that Shostakovich had set verses by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, including the poem

'Babi Yar', about a famous 1941 massacre in which the Nazis slaughtered almost 34,000 Ukrainian Jews. The first performance took place in a perfervid atmosphere. Then the authorities banned the work and it was some time before it could be heard again. I daresay that you do not have to be Jewish to feel the force of the words and Shostakovich's setting of them. But Barshai was Jewish and I am sure this particular symphony meant a lot to him.

GD The most obvious comparison is with the recordings of Kyrill Kondrashin, that of the 1962 premiere and the studio version made two years later. Although similarly intense, the two conductors achieve tension and drama in different ways. Kondrashin is faster and employs more *rubato*, really ratcheting up the tension at the climaxes. Barshai has a greater dynamic range and draws heavier accents from the strings, but his slower and more even tempi give the work a sense of grim inevitability.

TP What I find extraordinary is that despite his slower speeds, he keeps up the tension. At times the effect is almost overwhelming.

Barshai creates a brooding effect, whereas Kondrashin screws up the tension more obviously, especially in the premiere recording, where everyone must have been at fever pitch.

GD Barshai was known to use every last minute of rehearsal time. Some of his performances lacked spontaneity as a result; but in his best work, intensive rehearsal translated to increased focus and dynamism.

TP What interests me in this symphony is that Barshai achieves intense concentration without any outside stimulus: it all comes from within him.

GD Then there is the vocal element, the bass soloist and male-voice chorus. Bringing a Western orchestra into the mix is one thing but Barshai is wise to use Russian voices.

TP The bass soloist has a crucial effect on the listener's perceptions of the symphony. Barshai's soloist, Sergei Alexashkin, is a famous Mariinsky singer and has a tremendous presence, as well as a first-rate voice. Barshai imported a Russian chorus



Back in Russia: Rudolf Barshai conducting the Moscow Chamber Orchestra

and there is no getting away from the fact that they sound authentically Shostakovich as soon as they open their mouths. We get the authentic sound of the Thirteenth Symphony from both soloist and chorus, which means Barshai can focus all his attention on getting the right sound from the orchestra. Those who are allergic to Russian orchestras are here getting the best of both worlds.

GD Achieving coherency in the first movement is probably the conductor's hardest task, making clear its paradoxical nature, episodic and yet unrelenting. Barshai's singers play a key role in achieving that effect.

TP Yes, there is a marvellous *crescendo* through the chorus's first stanza, from 'I am terrified...' through to '...Jewish people'. And then Alexashkin is very fine at 'And here, on the cross...' and wonderfully hushed at 'I imagine myself to be Dreyfus'.

GD The second movement is more subversive. Shostakovich's dark humour perfectly matches the text here.

TP We are back with the irony and satire of *The Nose*, something Shostakovich never lost. One is reminded of *Till Eulenspiegel*, only Shostakovich is much more uproarious. I think Barshai's rhythmic control is marvellous, enhancing every aspect, and the raspberries at the end really register.

GD Barshai's slow tempi are particularly daring in the third movement. Alexashkin has to work hard to maintain the shape of his phrases. But the sense of inevitability, of unstoppable flow, that this steady tempo creates is particularly powerful.

TP What a contrast this movement is! Barshai creates a really grey sound at the start. The use of percussion in this movement, as in Symphony No 14, is very effective.

GD The menacing outbursts in the fourth movement are particularly well managed. Barshai is sluggish in the fanfares though. It's that uniformity again – Kondrashin changes the speed and the mood for the fanfares in a way that Barshai seems unwilling to.

TP But Barshai handles the transition to this movement in a masterly fashion. One feels the irony in the chorus asserting that 'fears are dying', while the orchestra equally asserts that things still have some way to go. Shostakovich is writing from even more experience than Yevtushenko and this is a chilling, if ultimately hopeful movement. Barshai is inexorable in maintaining the mood. The march tempo at 'We didn't fear to build in snowstorms' is beautifully picked up. There is a terrific climax and the soloist is very fine at his last statement.

GD Then, in the finale, Barshai finally moves to more fluid tempi, as fluid as Kondrashin's, if slower. They are very similar interpretations, although Barshai has the upper hand for the quality of his orchestra, especially the strings, unified in the *pizzicatos* and dark-toned elsewhere. I think Barshai's choir sings better in this movement too.

TP Again Barshai's transition is absolutely superb and we emerge into a sound world that could almost be Tchaikovsky or Rimsky-Korsakov; then we move into a more Mussorgskian world, full of typical Shostakovichian irony. There is a touch of the Prokofiev of *Romeo and Juliet* in this movement, too, and I wonder if Shostakovich is saluting the 'career' of his fellow composer who shared with him in the 1948 denunciations by Zhdanov. To my ears, Barshai's tempo changes are organic. The interludes, such as that before 'Thus – salute to the career!', are very interesting. Knowing that he does not have much text to play with, and wanting to write a substantial movement on this very subversive poem (just imagine all the apparatchiks squirming, knowing how they have built their 'careers'), Shostakovich lets the orchestra speak for him some of the time. I think it takes a Russian conductor to realise all the implications of this finale, and Barshai is right up there with the best. He gets wonderful sound from the orchestra in the final bars, with the return of the tolling bell.

GD The end of a gruelling journey. The Thirteenth isn't the most popular of Shostakovich's symphonies but what a compelling case Barshai and the WDR forces make for it! Available recordings vary greatly in tempo and mood, suggesting that any conductor coming to the work must have a clear idea of what he or she wants to communicate. Barshai's reading is distinctive, focused and coherent at every stage. He gives us a very personal account, but one his old friend Shostakovich would surely have endorsed. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Operas in one act

The discipline of producing a short, taut single-act opera often brings the best out of a composer. Here, **Richard Lawrence** introduces 10 one-act operas that are the musical and dramatic highlights of the genre

One-act operas come in two guises. There's the category that includes Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and several examples by Richard Strauss, of which the best known are *Salome* and *Elektra*: pieces that provide a full, albeit short, evening's entertainment. And there are those that require a stablemate, the most celebrated examples being *Cavalleria rusticana* by Mascagni and *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo. The former was the winning entry in the second competition for one-act operas organised by the publisher Edoardo Sonzogno; *Pagliacci* was seen by both composer and publisher as a follow-up, and the two operas are the very embodiment of one-acter

pairings, though in fact *Pagliacci* consists of a prologue and not one but two acts.

It is this second category that is problematic: with the possible exception of the pairing of Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* with his *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, double bills seem to mean box-office death. How to choose operas that complement each other? I have seen Zemlinsky's *Eine florentinische Tragödie* coupled with his *Der Zwerg* (good), and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* performed with *L'heure espagnole* (not so good). (And in the first category, the premiere of Strauss's *Daphne* has been combined with a performance of his *Friedenstag* – three hours of new music plus an interval! It must have been unendurable.)

The consequence is that many fine operas languish in obscurity. The 10 that I've selected aren't obscure, but performances are infrequent. All are in the second category except for *Daphne* and, perhaps, *Iolanta* (the latter shared its premiere with that of *The Nutcracker*, no less). But there are many others worth investigating: several by Rossini and Holst, one by Poulenc, Weber's *Abu Hassan*, the Britten church parables...I'd particularly like to see the three early Hindemith operas (*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* being the first), about which the conductor Fritz Busch wrote so amusingly in his memoirs. Anyone care to found the SPOSO (Society for the Promotion of Short Operas)? **G**



Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* at Glyndebourne in 2012, directed by Laurent Pelly

PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON ANNAND



10 Ravel

L'heure espagnole

Soloists; LPO / Kazushi Ono

FRA Musica (F) DVD FRA008;

(F) FRA508 (11/13)

This is the saucy story of a clockmaker's wife who uses her husband's absence for an hour each week to entertain her gentleman friends. A customer so impresses her with his strength as he carries grandfather clocks upstairs and down again that in the end, exasperated by her two lovers, she asks him to go upstairs 'sans horloge'. In this Glyndebourne production, Stéphanie d'Oustrac leads an excellent cast, who cavort in a wonderfully cluttered set.



5 Zemlinsky

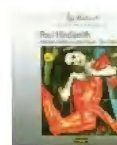
Eine florentinische Tragödie

Soloists; Royal Concertgebouw

Orch / Riccardo Chailly Decca

(M) (2) 473 734-2DF2 (12/97*)

Like *Salome*, Zemlinsky's three-handed shocker is based on a drama by Oscar Wilde. The setting is 16th-century Florence. Simone, a merchant, returns home to find his wife, Bianca, in the company of Prince Guido Bardì. Simone plays with the stranger like a cat with a mouse. When they come to fight, Bianca urges her lover to kill her husband. But it is Guido who dies, and the married couple who embrace. Under Chailly, the tension is almost unbearable.



5 Hindemith

Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen

Soloists; Berlin RSO /

Gerd Albrecht

Wergo (F) WER60132-50 (2/89)

And here's another shocker, staged in Stuttgart in 1921, four years after the Zemlinsky was premiered in the same city. The action is as obscure as the title - *Murderer, Hope of Women*, after an expressionist play by Oskar Kokoschka. A man and a woman meet, witnessed by a group of warriors and servant girls. He orders his men to brand her; she stabs him; there's more horror. Suffice it to say that much of the music is post-Romantic, performed here with conviction.



7 Puccini

Gianni Schicchi

Soloists; Rome Opera

Orchestra / Gabriele Santini

Warner Classics

(S) (3) 212714-2 (6/93*)

This third part of Puccini's *Il trittico* evokes a rather different Florence from Zemlinsky's. Puccini attended the first night of Verdi's *Falstaff* in 1893, an experience that bore fruit in this comedy 25 years later. The story tells of a rogue who offers to help a family who've been cut out of their rich relative's will. He impersonates the deceased, dictates a new will - but leaves most of the estate to himself. Tito Gobbi, also a famous Falstaff, is supreme.



6 Walton

The Bear

Soloists; ECO / James Lockhart

Warner Classics (S) (2)

440858-2 (12/67*)

The Bear, adapted from Chekhov, is a comedy about a middle-aged landowner who seeks urgent repayment from an attractive young widow of money he had lent to her husband. They quarrel but eventually fall into each other's arms. Walton's witty score includes parodies, including a naughty one of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, premiered in the same hall at Aldeburgh seven years earlier. This recording features the original cast and is an utter delight.



5 Sullivan

Trial by Jury

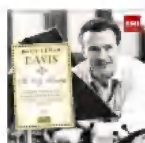
Soloists; D'Oyly Carte Opera

Company; Royal Opera

House Orch / Isidore Godfrey

Decca (F) (2) 473 665-2DX2 (4/64*)

Parody was part of Sullivan's armoury, too, and this earliest surviving collaboration with WS Gilbert includes two splendid examples. The Learned Judge enters to a Handelian chorus, and later leads off an ensemble ('A nice dilemma') that pokes affectionate fun at Bellini's *La sonnambula*. In this D'Oyly Carte recording, Thomas Round is wittily insouciant as the Defendant. It's coupled with an excellent *Yeomen of the Guard* under Sargent.



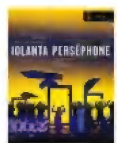
4 Stravinsky

Oedipus Rex

Soloists; RPO / Colin Davis

EMI (S) (6) 463989-2 (3/63*)

This is a cheat, as it's in two acts - but it lasts only 50 minutes. Ronald Dowd, a stalwart at Sadler's Wells, was a wonderful Idomeneo, Samson and Peter Grimes, and is equally stirring in this recording from 1961, partnered by the formidably Verdian Jocasta of Patricia Johnson, under the inspired direction of Colin Davis. The other soloists and the men's chorus are granite-hard when so required. Ralph Richardson's actorish delivery as the Speaker jars a little, though.



3 Tchaikovsky

Iolanta

Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra

of Teatro Real, Madrid / Teodor

Currentzis Teatro Real (F) DVD

TR97011DVD: (F) TR97010BD (1/13)

Iolanta ('Iolanthe' in English, but don't be deceived) is about a princess kept in ignorance of her blindness. Her only chance - rejected by her father - of gaining her sight is if she learns of her condition and agrees to treatment by a Moorish physician. She falls in love with a stranger, who tries to explain light and colour. All ends happily. Peter Sellars's direction is as striking as ever, with beautiful lighting effects.



2 R Strauss

Daphne

Soloists; Vienna State Opera

Chorus; Vienna SO /

Karl Böhm

DG (M) (2) 445 322-2GX2 (11/94*)

If *Iolanta*'s blindness could be a metaphor for sexual innocence, there's no doubt about the inviolability of Daphne, who rejects the advances both of her childhood friend and of a stranger who turns out to be Apollo. Strauss's apparent dislike of the tenor voice is belied by the ardour of Fritz Wunderlich and James King. Karl Böhm, the dedicatee, is exemplary in a work that, in lesser hands, can drag.



1

Bartók Duke Bluebeard's Castle

Elizabeth Laurence *mez* **Robert Lloyd** *bass* **LPO / Adam Fischer** Kultur (F) DVD D4497

Here is an opera highly suited to home listening, when one's imagination can conjure up a physical dimension to complement what is essentially an interior drama; and there are excellent recordings from, among others, István Kertész and Iván Fischer. But this BBC film is so imaginatively staged that it demands to be seen. As Judith explores Bluebeard's mind, moving from one locked room to the next, she sees blood

- most eerily of all, as it seeps from the tiles of the torture chamber. Robert Lloyd, black-bearded, frock-coated, is both sinister and sympathetic, while Elizabeth Laurence, in bridal white, makes a believable wife: innocent, curious and fearful.



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THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Flow my tears

When Lassus wrote **Lagrima di San Pietro** he was weeping not only for the apostle's spiritual crisis but also for his own. His cycle of 20 madrigals and a motet unite Christ, Peter and the listener in a profound way, as **Fabrice Fitch** rediscovers during his search for the best version

As with several famous pieces connected with their composer's death (Mozart's Requiem, say, or Berg's Violin Concerto), the story of the *Lagrima di San Pietro* undoubtedly adds to its mystique. In the early 1590s the phenomenally productive Lassus suffered a kind of nervous breakdown or stroke. Remarkably, a letter from his wife survives which recounts the incident: returning one day to their home in Munich, she found him unable to recognise her. His output stopped altogether, and from then on he became withdrawn and obsessed with his own death. The early months of 1594 apparently saw renewed creativity, however, for on May 24 he signed a dedicatory epistle to the reigning pope, Clement VIII, for an apparently new work. Entitled *Lagrima di San Pietro* ('Tears of Saint Peter'), it dramatises the spiritual crisis of the apostle at his threefold denial of Christ before the latter's trial and Crucifixion. Three weeks later, Lassus died. The *Lagrima*, his last work, was printed the following year by his long-term publisher in Munich, Adam Berg.

There was good reason for the 'melancholia' of Lassus's final years. The carefree atmosphere of the Munich court ended abruptly when Wilhelm V became duke in 1579. It seems that Wilhelm experienced a spiritual crisis of his own, which led to a cooling in his previously close relationship with his Kapellmeister, Lassus (shades of Henry V and Falstaff!), whose famously mischievous correspondence with Wilhelm more or less stops from that point. The militant Jesuit order stepped in to fill the spiritual vacuum in Wilhelm's life. Its influence probably played a part in the estrangement, for its dogmatism was far

removed from Lassus's cosmopolitan outlook. The court's musical establishment was drastically cut, and at the time of his death moves were afoot to dismiss him from service.

PLOT AND TEXT: THE EYES HAVE IT

But the *Lagrima* hardly needs such a poignant genesis to enhance its pathos. The text is taken from a poem written in a similar spirit of atonement by Lassus's contemporary Luigi Tansillo. The first eight stanzas recount Peter's denial, already cast in the past tense. An unspoken dialogue ensues between him and his master, in which Christ repeatedly taxes his disciple with betrayal. A second section depicts Peter's growing remorse in a series of vivid metaphors, against the backdrop of Christ's trial and condemnation. In the final section (stanzas 15–20), Peter addresses Life in reproachful terms: in trying to save his earthly body he has placed his immortal soul in jeopardy. Finally, he renounces Life and abjures his former cowardice: 'Since I've denied the real (eternal) life, I will no longer seek its shadow.' The cycle ends with a motet (on a Latin text possibly by Lassus himself) in which Christ himself addresses humankind from the Cross: these pains are as nothing, he says, compared with those that your sins cause me.

This strong narrative arc is the result of deliberate choice. From Tansillo's rather longer text, Lassus selected just 20 stanzas (the usual number for a madrigal collection), treating each as a separate piece. If it's tempting to view the composition of the *Lagrima* in the light of the Jesuits' takeover of mores at the Munich court, then Lassus's self-identification with the



St Peter Weeping before the Virgin: oil on canvas by Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, 1591-1666)

cycle's protagonist is even more plausible, given his frame of mind in these last years. A more subtle observation, perhaps, concerns the pervasive role of the eye in Tansillo's narrative: those of Peter, whose tears give the cycle its name; those of Christ, whose 'every glance [is] like a fluent tongue' reproaching his disciple, and which are likened to deadly arrows piercing his heart; and, finally, those of the listener in the final stanza ('See, Man, what I suffer for



PHOTOGRAPHY: ERICH LESSING/ANG IMAGES

you'). If the self-abasement and elaborately contrived metaphors are very much of their time, this emphasis on the eye as a medium for silent communication resonates powerfully with a modern audience.

From all this, it's evident that close familiarity with the text is as indispensable to an appreciation of the *Lagrine* as it is in opera. Not only is the narrative direct and powerful; Lassus's treatment of the text is of a profundity unsurpassed in any period

before or since. Word-painting is never overdone – it's even witty when occasion allows (as when Peter recalls Christ's curing of the lame and the dumb, and the raising of Lazarus in stanza 18). Even more admirable is Lassus's acute portrayal of the emotional situation at the heart of the narrative, the detached recollection of an intense personal crisis. In the first half, Christ's reproaches call forth increasingly drawn-out dissonances (for example at

'Più fieri' – 'more cruel are your eyes' – in stanza 7), while in the second half the most affective moments are of disembodied stillness (try the closing passages of stanzas 13 or 16) occasionally tinged with a subtle chromaticism recalling the composer's youthful *Prophetiae Sybillarum*. These feelings culminate in the final motet – and I can think of few clearer illustrations of music's power to render conflicting sentiments simultaneously. To modern

ears, its sobriety may seem anticlimactic; but the contrast between the text's morbid insistence on the instruments of Christ's Passion and the music's seeming detachment is Lassus's final masterstroke of ambiguity, suggestive either of serenity or utter despair, uniting Christ, Peter and (in keeping with Counter-Reformation aesthetics) the listener. If an attribute of a 'masterpiece' is the sense that repeated listening deepens both our understanding and the piece's unfathomability, then the *Lagrime* is one of the supreme artistic achievements not just of the Renaissance, but of any period.

THE RECORDINGS

Although the *Lagrime* has a sacred plot, the pieces comprising the cycle are madrigals, and the final motet clearly marks the distance between the two genres. This tension is very instructive, for recordings of the *Lagrime* may be said to stand or fall by their ability to straddle the sacred/secular divide effectively.

Pioneers in this as in so much else, The Consort of Musicke were the first ensemble to commit the cycle to disc in its entirety, in 1982. Only with the 400th anniversary of Lassus's death in 1994 did new recordings appear, producing no fewer than three (by the Huelgas Ensemble, Ars Nova and Ensemble Vocal Européen). Since then recordings have appeared at more regular intervals, so that today there are eight in all, which may be neatly divided into



Duke Wilhelm V and his son, attributed to Hans von Aachen (1552-1615)

four groups of two, according to the forces involved.

FOR SOLO VOICES AND MIXED ENSEMBLE

Pride of place goes to **The Consort of Musicke**, who opt for a higher pitch than most other accounts, and no fewer than four women out of seven singers. The vocal quality is admirable – unsurprisingly in a line-up that features

Consort mainstays Emma Kirkby and Evelyn Tubb on the cantus lines and Richard Wistreich on bass. The predominance of women's voices results in a transparent texture, which, combined with a quite strict approach to pulse, gives as close as one can find to a 'straight' reading of the work. I put this term in quotes because, as a specialist of the madrigal repertory, Anthony Rooley might have made more of the contrasts of mood and of affect than he does. The feel of the set would almost be closer to sacred music than to secular were it not for the consistently swift tempi adopted (the set lasts just 48 minutes). Put another way, the tension just alluded to between sacred and secular isn't entirely resolved, as though the ensemble were hesitating between the two. The addition in the concluding motet of a viol consort doubling the voices adds to this impression, and results in awkward discrepancies of tuning and blend, the only jarring note in an otherwise solid account.

Though not the most searching performance available, it is of more than historical interest.

Under Philippe Herreweghe's direction, **Ensemble Vocal Européen** sing at a lower pitch than The Consort of Musicke, which instantly confers a darker, more burnished sonority. In contrast to their English counterparts, the singers here are predominantly male, with sopranos just for the two top (cantus) lines and tenors

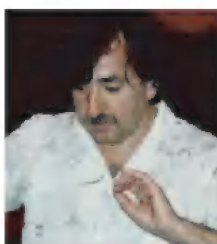


THE 'HISTORICAL' CHOICE

The Consort of Musicke / Rooley

L'Oiseau-Lyre © 443 197-20M

A strange phrase for a recording barely more than 30 years old, but Rooley's account seems very much of its time: bright tone, straight delivery and a relatively purist approach – but intelligent and unimpeachably musical.

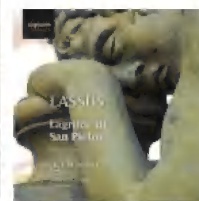
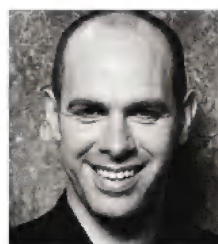


THE INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Huelgas Ensemble / Van Nevel

Sony Vivarte © SK53373

Were there more recordings to choose from, the fragmented surface here might give one pause; but – with voices as beguiling and instrumental timbres as well blended as these – this eccentric approach is an intriguing alternative.



THE RUNNER-UP

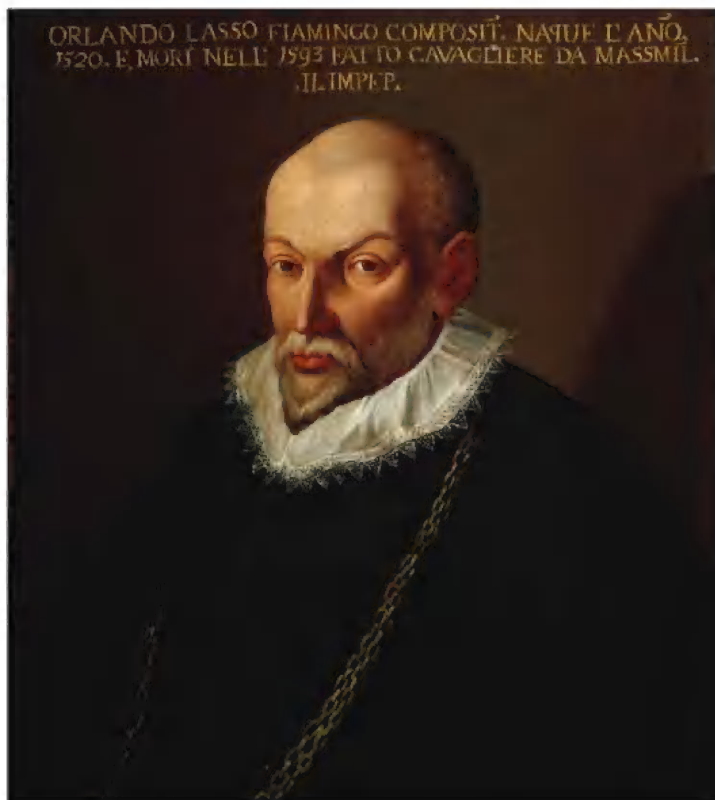
Gallicantus / Crouch Signum © SIGCD339

Broadly similar in approach to my top choice, Gallicantus's robust and committed account will hearten those who fear for the future of this repertory on disc. The countertenors on the top lines are a vigorous alternative to women's voices.

for the altus parts. Technically, the cast here is probably the strongest of all these recordings: it includes the incomparable Maria Cristina Kiehr and Johanna Koslowsky on the top lines, and Gerd Türk and Peter Kooy among the tenors. The grain of each voice is very prominent, even more so than with *The Consort of Musicke*, but the overall sound is utterly compelling. The difference between the two ensembles marks the distance covered in just a decade by interpreters of this repertoire: here, contrasts and gradations of light and shade are conveyed by changes of vocal timbre and a masterful deployment of *rubato*. At times the music slows to a funereal pace to accentuate a dissonance (as when Christ berates his 'amico disleal, discepol fiero' – 'disloyal friend, cruel disciple' – in stanza 4) or to indicate that still centre of despair engulfing Peter prior to his final renunciation (end of stanza 16). But other moments are bathed in radiant serenity (for example, as Peter evokes his eternal soul at the end of stanza 15) or exquisite pathos (when Peter's tears are compared to ice melted by the rays of Christ's gaze – 'Quando Christo ver lui gli occhi rivolse' – in stanza 10). These moments of psychological insight draw one in, but the consummate narrative sweep communicates itself more subtly, ensuring that one returns to this set again and again.

FOR MULTIPLE VOICES AND INSTRUMENTS

The famous illumination by the Munich court painter Hans Mielich, depicting Lassus leading the ducal chapel ensemble (illustrated on page 109), lingers in the mind's eye as one considers the two recordings that blend voices and instruments. The Huelgas Ensemble's account dates from 1993, that of the *Capella Ducale Venetia* from 2000. The latter is arguably the only real disappointment among these eight recordings, for who could imagine that an Italian ensemble active in the era of *Concerto Italiano* or *La Venexiana* would offer such a stolid account? Not that there are any notable technical problems: these are fine singers and accomplished



Lassus – as depicted in an anonymous painting housed in a museum in Bologna

players on a variety of instruments, including recorders, viols, a dulcian on the bass-line, and chamber organ. The presence of these instruments lends fullness, but a lack of variety in their deployment dulls its effect, eventually weighing down the sound image. Most surprising of all is the unwillingness to play with the beat or to seize hold of Lassus's word-painting.

Compared with this monochrome reading, the *Huelgas Ensemble*'s is a cornucopia of colours: recorders, cornettos, sackbuts, strings and harpsichord, with a change of scoring for each stanza. Unlike the instruments in *Capella Ducale*'s reading, those of the Huelgas's not only double the voices but often hold a line on their own. This often helps make sense of the constantly crossing parts. The changes of texture are certainly entertaining and seem carefully chosen to enhance the mood of each stanza; but the question arises whether

this kaleidoscopic approach enhances or detracts from the cycle's narrative arc or its fundamental seriousness. Listening to those stanzas where the singers are on their own, it's clear that they would be a match for one-to-a-part interpreters, for Paul Van Nevel has always been able to call on first-rate singers. But since those who prefer an all-vocal approach are so well served elsewhere, Van Nevel's reading can be confidently recommended as the joker in the pack, a position that he seems to relish anyway. By his standards, however, the eccentricity quotient is reasonably restrained, and his treatment of pulse, though rather staged, adds to the set's character – so, for that matter, does his choice of transposition of the notated high clefs from stanza 13 onwards, which results in an improbable

but distinctive tritone relationship with what immediately precedes it.

FOR MIXED CHOIR

Both *Ars Nova* and the *Montreal Ancient Music Studio* opt for a choral approach.

Ars Nova have the bigger sound, since at no point that I could discern is the number of singers per part reduced. This recording is also the more obtrusively 'conducted' of the two; indeed, Bo Holten's direction lays itself open to the charge of overemphasis. The monumental feel that is obtained from the start is at odds with the cycle's exploration of intensely private feelings thereafter, and fast quaver or dotted passages are rendered more often than not in a jogging quasi-*staccato* that is inappropriately, and surely unintentionally, humorous (try the lower voices' announcement of the cockerel's crow in stanza 3). Of all available versions this one

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1982 The Consort of Musicke / Rooley	L'Oiseau-Lyre © 443 197-20M (12/82 – n/a)
1993 Ens Vocal Européen / Herreweghe	Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 1483 (8/94)
1993 Huelgas Ensemble / Van Nevel	Sony Vivarte © SK53373 (8/94)
1994 Ars Nova / Holten	Naxos © 8 553311 (1/96)
2000 Capella Ducale Venetia / Picotti	CPO © CPO999 862-2 (7/04)
2001 Hofkapelle / Procter	Christophorus © CHR77255
2010 Montreal Ancient Music Studio / C. Jackson	ATMA Classique © ACD2 2509 (1/11)
2013 Gallicantus / Crouch	Signum © SIGCD339 (12/13)

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Bach JS	Lutheran Masses Vol. 2	Sixteen, Christophers	£12.00
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Brahms	Works for Cello & Piano (2cd)	Aasgaard, Roscoe	£18.00
Byrd	Bach & Ligeti: Live Wigmore Hall	Mahan Esfahani	£ 7.00
Haydn	Seven Last Words	Cuarteto Casals	£11.00
Janáček #	Overgrown Path + Schumann Kinderszenen	Hamelin	£10.25
Panufnik	Symphony No. 5 etc.	Polish RSO, Borowicz	£11.00
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	La bella più bella	Invernizzi	£11.00

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Lassus and the Bavarian chapel royal: psalmbook illumination by Hans Mielich (1516-73)

is perhaps the least easy to love. The **Montreal Ancient Music Studio** performance is far more nuanced, switching from solo to doubled voices both within and between stanzas, and demonstrating a finely tuned awareness of the potential for *rubato*; however, the episodes of mixed scoring can also cloud the sound image, which is clearer when fewer voices are present. Given the very private sentiment that pervades the *Lagrime*, the question may be asked whether a choir is the ideal medium for it (it may be significant that Herreweghe, who has committed so much Lassus to disc before and since with his choir Collegium Vocale Gent, has opted here for soloists); but whatever one's view of the matter, and notwithstanding the many qualities of

the Canadian ensemble, neither of these recordings quite makes a definitive case.

FOR SOLO VOICES WITH COUNTERTENORS

Balancing the mixed solo consorts discussed above are two recordings with countertenors on the top lines. The earlier of the two, made in 2001 by German ensemble **Hofkapelle** directed by Michael Procter, is by some margin the swiftest account, lasting just 42 minutes. The result is by no means as breathless as one might expect, for the group sound compact and purposeful. That said, the rather unyielding approach to pulse permits of few opportunities to linger over dissonances or expressive touches; and, while initially pleasing, the vocal colour, which

lacks variety, palls over time. As with *The Consort of Musicke*, perhaps, the fast tempo may have been taken with the madrigal genre in mind, for the motets that fill the rest of the disc are taken at a noticeably slower pace and are none the worse for it. Orlandophiles shouldn't hesitate to acquire this set, however, for these motets, which may well date from the same Indian summer that produced the *Lagrime*, are superb.

I suppose it was inevitable that a group with the name **Gallicantus** should eventually record a work for whose plot a cockcrow is the catalyst. I reviewed the ensemble's recording of the *Lagrime* only last year, and revisiting it for this round-up confirms its quality. In conception it's closest to Herreweghe's set, though the tempi are noticeably faster (the latter lasts just under an hour, and Gallicantus's under 54 minutes) and the sound seems brighter, for David Allsopp and Mark Chambers on the top lines sport as luminescent a sound as any countertenor, whereas Kiehr and Koslowsky are relatively dark-toned sopranos. But there is the same balance between keenly observed detail and architectonic breadth, and the sound image has a comparable bloom. (The only jarring moment occurs at the start of the motet, whose pitch level is perceptibly out in relation to the end of Tansillo's final stanza.) It is heartening that a relatively young ensemble – and the most recent recording of this survey – should measure up so well against such distinguished competition. If ultimately, to my mind, Herreweghe's singers have the edge overall, it's on account of their profound psychological insights into Lassus's setting of Tansillo and the compelling presence of their voices, both individually (those sopranos!) and collectively. **G**



THE TOP CHOICE

Ensemble Vocal Européen / Herreweghe
Harmonia Mundi **G** HMC90 1483

This account of Lassus's final masterpiece has it all: splendid sound, searching interpretative detail, compelling narrative arc: to my mind, it's one of the finest recordings of Renaissance music ever made.



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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

There's a feast of music-making from around the world during the month of June, live in the concert hall and opera house, on the radio and the web, on television, and in the cinema

EVENT OF THE MONTH



June
5-27

London

English National Opera presents Hector Berlioz's **Benvenuto Cellini**, unseen in

London for many years and never before at London's Coliseum. Staged over eight performances throughout June, the work is directed by Monty Python star Terry Gilliam and conducted by ENO music director Edward Gardner – the same pairing responsible for the company's celebrated *The Damnation of Faust* in 2011 (with Peter Hoare and Christopher Purves, pictured left). The cast features tenor Michael Spyres in the title-role, soprano Corinne Winters (last season's much-admired Violetta) as Cellini's lover, Teresa, and ENO favourite Willard White as Pope Clement VII. On June 17 audiences unable to make the Coliseum performances will be able to watch the production live at cinemas throughout the UK as part of ENO Screen. eno.org

June
4

BBC Four

A repeat of the recent documentary about the life of Gloucestershire poet-composer

Ivor Gurney, who survived the First World War – a damaged but deeply creative man who spent his final years in the City of London Mental Hospital. Tim Kendall presents *The Poet Who Loved the War*. bbc.co.uk/bbcfour

June
4-7

Berlin & web

Lorin Maazel conducts the Berlin Philharmonic in an all-**Richard Strauss** programme

featuring *Don Quixote*, *Don Juan* and the *Der Rosenkavalier* Suite. Catch it live or at the Digital Concert Hall. berliner-philharmoniker.de

June
4-27

Istanbul

The **International Istanbul Music Festival**, launched in

1973, plays host to musicians from all over the world, including Steven Isserlis, Nuria Rial, Il Giardino Armonico, Julia Lezhneva, Sinfonia Varsovia (the resident ensemble), Piotr Anderszewski, Julian Rachlin, Nelson Freire, Pepe Romero, Fazil Say and Yuja Wang. Concerts take place in various venues

throughout the city – one of the most striking settings being astride the Bosphorus linking Europe and Asia. muzik.lksv.org/en

June
5-7

Melbourne

Australian pianist Piers Lane returns to the Hamer Hall stage to perform Beethoven's

Third Concerto with the **Melbourne Symphony Orchestra** on three consecutive nights. Led by principal conductor Olari Elts, these concerts also feature Brahms's *Tragic Overture*, Arvo Pärt's *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten* and Beethoven's Symphony No 4. mso.com.au



Bernard Haitink celebrates his 85th at the Barbican

June
5 & 7

London & BBC Radio 3

As part of the 'Haitink at 85' series at London's Barbican, **Bernard Haitink** conducts

the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony on June 5. Also on the programme are Schumann's *Manfred* Overture and Berg's Violin Concerto featuring Isabelle Faust, whose recording of the work for Harmonia Mundi won a *Gramophone* Award. Two days later, Haitink and the COE return with Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* and Piano Concerto in G with soloist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, alongside Mozart's Symphony No 40. Both Barbican performances are to be recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in the UK and internationally. bbc.co.uk/radio3

June
6 & 8

Pittsburgh & web

Pittsburgh SO music director **Manfred Honeck** conducts two performances of Mahler's

monumental Ninth Symphony at Heinz Hall. The conductor and orchestra have established a strong association with the composer's symphonies, having recorded Nos 1, 3, 4 and 5 for Japanese label Exton. Those unable to make the performances in person can listen live on June 8 via official Pittsburgh Symphony radio station



Lorin Maazel conducts Richard Strauss in Berlin

WQED, and international audiences can listen online via the station's website. pittsburghsymphony.org

June 8 Glyndebourne & cinema
Live cinema screenings from Glyndebourne, featuring music director Robin Ticciati conducting Strauss's **Der Rosenkavalier** with Kate Royal (Marschallin), Tara Erraught (Octavian), Teodora Gheorghiu (Sophie) and Lars Woldt (Baron Ochs). glyndebourne.com

June 8&29 London
A spin-off of pianist Iain Burnside's *Gramophone* Editor's Choice Delphian set of the **Rachmaninov** songs – two concerts at Wigmore Hall featuring artists from the recording: Evelina Dobraeva and Sergey Romanovsky (June 4) and Ekaterina Siurina and Rodion Pogossov (June 29). wigmore-hall.org.uk



JoAnn Falletta is guest conductor in Detroit

gramophone.co.uk

June 12-14 Berlin & web
Mariss Jansons makes a guest visit to the Berlin Philharmonic for an unusual pairing of Sir Harrison Birtwistle's *Dinab and Nick's Love Song* and Mahler's Third Symphony with mezzo Gerhild Romberger in three concerts. Live at the Philharmonie or at the Digital Concert Hall. berliner-philharmoniker.de

June 13-29 Aldeburgh
The **67th Aldeburgh Festival** gives a rare outing to Britten's pacifist opera *Owen Wingrave* (four performances) along with a study day and a screening of the original BBC TV production. Visitors, alongside artistic director Pierre-Laurent Aimard, include the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Monteverdi Choir, CBSO, Thomas Adès, Mark Padmore, Masaaki Suzuki and the Pavel Haas Quartet. aldeburgh.co.uk

June 16 London & BBC Radio 3
Wigmore Hall plays host to German cellist **Alban Gerhardt** in solo performances of Bach's Suite No 4 and Kodály's Solo Sonata, Op 8. Both works hold particular significance for the artist, who recorded the Kodály in 2003 for Oehms alongside Britten's Solo Cello Sonata, and who presented his Bach-Bahn project in 2012 – performing the cello suites at railway stations throughout Germany. The concert is to be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 as part of the station's Monday Lunchtime Concerts series. wigmore-hall.org.uk

June 17-28 London & cinema
Puccini's tragic opera **Manon Lescaut** – not seen at Covent Garden for 30 years – returns to the repertoire in a new staging by Jonathan Kent. Antonio Pappano conducts, and the starry cast includes Kristine Opolais (Manon), Jonas Kaufmann (Des Grieux) and Christopher Maltman (Lescaut). Cinema relay. roh.org.uk

June 18 Berlin & web & cinemas
Sir Simon Rattle closes the Berlin Phil's season with Charles Ives's *The Unanswered Question*, Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen* and Brahms's First Piano Concerto with Daniel Barenboim – the conductor's near-neighbour in Berlin – at the piano. Catch it live at the Philharmonie, at the Digital Concert Hall or in cinemas around Europe. berliner-philharmoniker.de

June 20-28 Liège & web
Belgium's Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège presents a new production of Rossini's comic opera **La gazetta**, staged at Théâtre Royal de Liège by Stefano Mazzonis di Pralafra, with sets designed by Jean-Guy Lecat and costumes by Fernand Ruiz. On the podium is Jan Schultsz. Audiences worldwide can watch one of the five performances live via online streaming service Medici.tv. operallege.be

June 23-29 BBC Radio 3
BBC Radio 3 turns its focus on **Ivor Gurney** (see June 4). Donald Macleod presents *Composer of the Week* (daily, Monday to Friday, at noon and 6.30pm, and also as a podcast), and on June 29, Iain Burnside's music theatre piece *A Soldier and a Maker* will be broadcast. HD streaming is available. bbc.co.uk/radio3

June 24 London
Gramophone Award-winners John Butt and his trusty **Dunedin Consort** are joined at Wigmore Hall by another *Gramophone* Award-winner, countertenor Iestyn Davies, for Bach concertos and cantatas (Nos 54 and 170). wigmore-hall.org.uk

June 28&29 Detroit
JoAnn Falletta guests with the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** as part of its Neighbourhood Concert Series, performing Roussel's *Bacchus et Ariane* Suite No 2, George Tsontakis's Clarinet Concerto *Anasa* (with David Krakauer) and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. dso.org

June 28&29 Toulouse & web
Tugan Sokhiev, music director of the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, continues his exploration of Mahler's symphonies with the composer's Third (with mezzo Anna Larsson and the Orféon Donostiarra choir). The orchestra continues its longstanding partnership with online streaming service Medici.tv with a broadcast of the live performance on June 29, available worldwide. onct.toulouse.fr

June 29 London
Jonathan Nott joins the LSO, pianist Steven Osborne and ondes martenot player Cynthia Millar at the Barbican for Messiaen's epic **Turangalila-symphonie**; the other work on the programme is Beethoven's Second Symphony. barbican.org.uk

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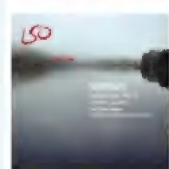
● THE TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES THE MOST OF YOUR MUSIC ●



THIS MONTH I enjoy an innovative amplifier from France and Denon's highly affordable desktop DAC, and explore the potential of the Pono music player.

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

MONTH TEST DISCS



The LSO's Sibelius Second under Sir Colin Davis has plenty of atmosphere and scale, especially in the 24-bit/96kHz download version.



At times lushly romantic, at others playfully jazzy, this set of Williamson's piano concertos on Hyperion is a glorious confection of performances and recording.

How high-end and low energy go hand in hand

From a digital-capable integrated amplifier to high-end power amps designed to use less electricity



High-end audio amplification isn't known for its energy efficiency, and when you factor in Class A designs, in which energy unused to drive the speakers is dissipated as heat, the idea of the audiophile with one ear on the music and one eye on the spinning of the electricity meter dials is hard to escape. However, the latest line-up of power amplifiers from US company **Krell** is designed to deliver the high-quality sound available from Class A topology while consuming less energy than conventional non-switching amplifier designs. Krell president Bill McKeigan says the design is 'is like a high-efficiency 12-cylinder automotive engine in which some of the cylinders shut down when you don't need all that power. Just as that engine can run efficiently yet deliver 600 horsepower in an instant, the iBias amplifier can run efficiently yet in a matter of microseconds gives you hundreds of watts of full Class A bias for musical peaks.' The new technology is available in a range of compact amplifiers, all of which have Ethernet connectivity to monitor factors such as temperature: there are two monobloc designs, the £8750 Solo 375 and £11,250 Solo 575; two stereo amplifiers, the £7500 Duo 175 and £9500 Duo 300; and a range of multichannel models.

Also new from America is the latest integrated amplifier from **McIntosh**, the MA8000, which comes complete with a five-

input onboard digital-to-analogue converter, high-quality headphone section and a fully adjustable phono stage for moving magnet and moving coil cartridges. Selling for £9995, the new amplifier delivers 300W per channel, and as well as the phono stage and a digital section able to handle content at up to 32-bit/192kHz with a choice of electrical, optical or asynchronous USB connections, has six line-level and two balanced inputs.

At the other end of the price range but also offering innovative connectivity is **Pure's** £150 Contour D1 digital radio dock, combining DAB reception with connections for both the original 30-pin Apple dock connector and the newer Lightning design, plus Bluetooth wireless audio. It can also access the company's Pure Connect services, giving access to internet radio, streaming audio and other subscription content.

Denon is expanding its range of in-ear headphones with the arrival of two new models in its Music Maniac line. The £89 AH-C120 and £39 AH-C50 are said to be 'aimed at price-conscious yet demanding mobile music listeners'. The entry-level model uses 9mm drive units in ABS housings, has an in-line remote/microphone for use with smartphones, and comes with four sizes of silicon ear-tips to ensure a good fit. Meanwhile, the AH-C120 uses 11.5mm drive units in 'hybrid metal' housings, comes with an oxygen-free cable and, in addition to the silicon ear-tips, is provided

with a pair of Comply Foam TX-400M ear-tips. Both models are tuned to a flat frequency response but can be used with the company's app for iOS and Android devices, allowing user adjustment of the sound.

Finally this month, some new digital cables from a new cable company, **The Digital Music Box**. Drawing on more than 35 years' experience in high-end audio, founder Chris Coakes is introducing two handmade models designed for USB data transmission: the £495 Linus, using pure silver wire and silk and PTFE dielectrics, and the Kalliope power supply and USB cable, selling for £995 and designed to isolate USB devices from the problems of computer power supplies. Both models are available now. **G**

- 1** Krell's iBias amplifiers have been designed to give the benefits of Class A working with lower power consumption
- 2** The MA8000 amplifier from McIntosh is hugely flexible, with an extensive range of inputs both digital and analogue
- 3** Pure's Contour D1 radio dock offers a choice of 30-pin and Lightning connectors for Apple devices, plus Bluetooth
- 4** Denon's latest Music Maniac headphones are designed for affordability and are tuned to give a flat frequency response
- 5** The Digital Music Box's Kalliope USB cable has its own power supply, isolating connected audio devices from computer noise or interference

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Devialet 170

Innovative amplifier does things its own way and is a highly convincing listen

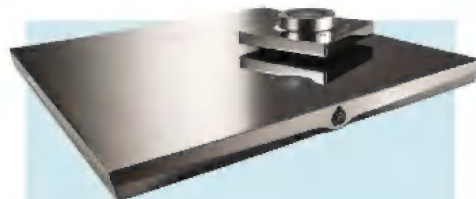
Some will have you believe that there's nothing new in hi-fi. The basic design of everything from amplifiers to loudspeakers was laid down decades ago, they suggest, and all that's happened since is a range of variations on those ancient themes. Indeed, some would have you believe that all competently designed amplifiers sound more or less the same and that the only differences are in power ratings and facilities. It's true that, slight differences aside – in areas such as the design of the input switching and volume control, the provision or otherwise of tone controls and the like, and the technology used in the power amplifier section – most amplifiers follow the common pattern of an analogue preamplifier control section ahead of a power amplifier 'engine room'. In recent times we have seen amplifiers offering a digital input section, by placing digital-to-analogue conversion in the preamp section, but little else has changed. Unless, that is, you consider the products of French company Devialet, which not only look entirely different from most amplifiers on the market but work completely differently too.

The first patents for what would become the Devialet amplifier topology were filed in 2004, with former telecommunications research lab director Pierre-Emmanuel Calmel laying out the groundwork of his Analogue Digital Hybrid amplifier design, and three years later the company was founded, launching its first product, the D-Premier, in 2009. Now, with the company's second-generation amplifiers – the 110, 170 and 240 – having been launched last year, Devialet is on sale in 45 countries,

has its HQ in Paris and production facility in Normandy, and a 25-strong research team developing new products and expanding the capabilities of the existing ones.

In a section of its website not entirely modestly entitled 'Devialet: an epic story', the company says that 'At Devialet, that which exists today and that which is yet to be is ruled by two beliefs: that knowledge is meant to be shared, and that music is the most important medium for cultivating human emotion. These two tenets are Devialet's lifeblood, and they shine through in every single product the company delivers. One day, everyone will own a Devialet.' Well, maybe not just yet: the current range starts at £4490, with the 170 amplifier we have here at £6390, or £7390 with the optional Devialet AIR (Asynchronous Intelligent Route) add-on, which gives streaming capability over Wi-Fi or Ethernet for content at up to 24-bit/192kHz. That's still well up into high-end territory but it is less expensive than the original D-Premier, and that price gets you a uniquely configurable amplifier, not to mention one that's a real looker.

Housed in the slimline casework – which stands just 4cm tall by a little over 38cm square, is milled from a single block of aluminium and weighs a relatively featherweight 5.35kg – is a 170W-per-channel amplifier you can set up using a home computer and an SD memory card, which has up to four electrical digital inputs, two optical digital and asynchronous USB input, and which can be configured to have a high-quality phono stage plus an extra line-in, a mono subwoofer output or an analogue stereo output, and also allow adjustment



DEVIALET 170

Type Stereo integrated amplifier

Price £6390, or £7390 with Devialet AIR streaming

Power output 170W per channel

Inputs/outputs Configurable using computer and SD card, to include up to four electrical digital inputs, two optical digital, two line-in with fixed 'bypass' setting, phono with adjustable loading, line-out, subwoofer out, active crossover options, etc

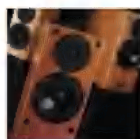
Other connections SD card for configuration/music playback, Ethernet/Wi-Fi for control and music streaming, USB-B for computer connection, 12 trigger

Remote control via wireless controller supplied or using iOS/Android app

Dimensions (WxHxD) 38.3x4x38.3cm
devialet.com, absolutesounds.com

of the filtering on those outputs. The AIR add-on allows streaming from Macs and PCs, and will also work with various media players on those computers, internet radio and streaming services such as Spotify and Qobuz. Meanwhile, the same SD card slot used for transferring programming information from a computer can also be used to play music stored on the memory devices – handy, as there's no conventional Type A USB socket to which 'sticks' can be connected. So far there's no direct

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Devialet is a highly accomplished amplifier. Here's a suggested system to get the best from it...

APPLE IMAC

A computer is all you need to deliver music to the Devialet 170, via USB, Ethernet or Wi-Fi. As a complete all-in-one system, the iMac series is the perfect partner.



TANNOY DEFINITION DC10T

A big, impressive speaker system with a rich, powerful sound will make the most of the Devialet: the floorstanding Tannoy Definition DC10T should be just the ticket.



streaming from NAS devices but a look at the specification of the amplifier would suggest that there's sufficient processing power going spare to allow such a feature to be added at some stage, should the company wish to do so. Devialet is constantly upgrading the software of these products to add functionality and enhance performance.

The 170, like the other Devialet amps, is controlled by a matching radio-frequency remote, also made from solid aluminium and allowing a range of customisation, or can be driven using a free app on iOS or Android smartphones or tablets. It has a built-in headphone amplifier and is really different in just about every way from a conventional stereo amplifier – in fact the only common references are the input sockets and the speaker outputs. Everything else needs something of a readjustment of thinking on the part of the user. The amplifier itself uses a combination of Class A analogue working and Class D digital, along with a switch-mode power supply and extensive digital signal processing – indeed, there's more DSP capability than is currently required within the 170, ready for future developments including digital filtering, room correction and crossovers – but the main change from the original D-Premier amplifier is the loss of that product's HDMI inputs in favour of the new models' USB and Ethernet input, Devialet having decided that HDMI isn't the high-end audio future it was once thought to be.

There are hours of harmless entertainment to be had playing with the configurator, which can be used in 'wizard' or 'advanced' modes: it's worth a look at en.devialet.com/configurator/advanced just to get a taste of how flexible this amplifier is and in what detail you can tailor it to your own needs. However, the real fun starts when you begin to listen to the 170.

PERFORMANCE

From the off, the Devialet has a seemingly relaxed presentation of music, free from any sense of the amplifier working hard to deliver the music. That's perhaps as it should be with 170W per channel available and sufficient headroom to handle the dynamics of even the most demanding music – but then quite a lot of amplifiers can do the easy-going thing, and most of

them don't cost anything like £7000. What the 170 brings – apart, of course, from that remarkable flexibility – is a sense of direct connection with the music being played. I connected to my Naim NDS network music player via both analogue and digital interconnects, and also used the AV bypass option to insert it into my usual Blu-ray/TV viewing system, as well as spending some time playing records on my Rega turntable, and in each case the amplifier delivered that same honest and entirely involving listen.

The big, expansive sound of Hyperion's recent set of Malcolm Williamson's piano concertos (5/14) is handled beautifully by the Devialet, opening up the interplay between soloist Piers Lane and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra under Howard Shelley. By turns sweeping and dramatic and then playful and intensely rhythmic, this set has a delicious pace and impetus, fully realised with the 170 in the driving seat. And yet this is all achieved without sacrificing any of that warmth and scale the French amplifier does so well, from the weight it brings to the bass to the finest nuance in the treble. This combination of scale and detail is also heard to good effect in the LSO/Colin Davis recording of Sibelius's Second Symphony (6/07), recently released by Bowers & Wilkins as part of its Society of Sound. The size and power of the orchestra are thrilling but so is the lightness of touch with which the music is handled in the opening movement, the Devialet pulling off the fine trick of delivering full weight without slowness, and speed without any sense of thinness or lack of bass extension.

Agreed, to some ears the 170 might sound just a shade too revealing, and almost clinical with some lighter-sounding source and speaker combinations – it's some way from the lush and rich sound preferred by some listeners. However, when it comes to delivering maximum information from source to speakers, the ability to drive those speakers in a convincing fashion and, above all, sounding musical and entirely enjoyable, this amplifier has much to commend it. Kudos, then, to Devialet for taking the leap and thinking differently about the design of hi-fi amplifiers: the result is as stylish as it's unorthodox and deserves a long, careful audition to hear just what it can bring to your system. **G**

DESIGN NOTES

Pierre-Emmanuel Calmel

Co-founder and designer, Devialet

On the family concert-listening ritual, Pink Floyd at Versailles and how HD music is the future



Responsible for what became Devialet's Analogue Digital Hybrid technology, Pierre-Emmanuel Calmel founded the company in 2007 after a career in telecoms research. Today the company has more than 50 employees, including 35 engineers in R&D.

He says his earliest musical experiences involved the family gathering around the radiogram to listen to Sunday evening concerts on France Musique – 'It was a kind of solemn moment, like a ritual' – while his most memorable musical encounter involved Pink Floyd live at the Chateau de Versailles in the summer of his graduation year, 1988. 'The set, the music, the atmosphere...everything was magic! I felt the unmistakable sensation of live music for the first time,' he says.

'When designing and testing products, I listen to jazz, classical, percussive styles and lots more. Personal favourites include *Le temps passé* by Michel Jonasz, and great piano recordings – especially Chopin performed by Claudio Arrau.'

Calmel is confident high-resolution music has a bright future. 'With the growing number of music streaming services that solve storage issues and 4G networks that allow greater speed, we are on the path to be able to listen to HD music via our iPhones very soon. Besides, when you hear the difference between MP3s and music ripped bit-for-bit from CD – the latter is clearly better – you are curious to listen to the difference between the CD format and HD music.'

'We are on the path to be able to listen to HD music via our iPhones very soon'



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CEDIA

● REVIEW DENON DA-300USB DAC

A highly competitive digital-to-analogue converter from one of the bigger names in mainstream audio

No job's too big or too small for this value-for-money compact desktop DAC

Now we're well into the Second Age of the DAC, things are shaping up much the same as they did first time round, when we were all being encouraged to upgrade our CD players. Back then, at the end of the 1980s, a trickle of specialist hi-fi companies offering digital-to-analogue converters was soon swollen as just about every accessory and mainstream hi-fi company joined in; more recently, the reinvention of DACs as an add-on for computer-based audio systems has attracted just about every company still standing in audio (and quite a few names either previously unknown or more celebrated in the studio or computer markets) to launch their own converters.

Denon is the latest to launch its own 'desktop DAC', the DA-300USB, hot on the heels of the likes of TEAC's UD-H01 and UD-501, and Sony's neat UDA-1 DAC/amplifier combination.

As the model designation suggests, this is a USB-connectable DAC, and it undercuts its Japanese rivals with a very competitive £329 price tag. It's packaged in a compact enclosure – around 17cm square and 5.5cm tall – and is also able to be used standing vertically (with a clip-on stand provided in the box) to reduce the amount of desktop space it occupies, with a clever automatic adjustment of the orientation of its display when so used.

It has a bit-transparent asynchronous USB input able to accept content at up to 24-bit/192kHz as well as DSD 2.8MHz and 5.6MHz, which it handles using DoP (DSD Audio over PCM frames), and the USB input's interface ground circuit is isolated from the converter's audio section to exclude noise from computers.

Alongside the USB input are three more S/PDIF digital inputs (one coaxial/electrical and two opticals, all capable of handling up to 24/192 files), a high-quality headphone stage with its own volume control and a pair of fixed-level analogue outputs.

The DA-300USB uses Denon's proprietary Advanced AL32 Processing, designed to enhance the 'reproducibility of weak signals...by expanding 16 bit digital data to 32 bit', feeding 32-bit/192kHz-compatible digital-to-analogue conversion. Independent master clock



SPECIFICATION DENON DA-300USB

Type USB DAC

Price £329

Inputs Asynchronous USB, one coaxial/electrical and two optical digital

Outputs Fixed-level line on RCA phono, headphone on 6.3mm socket with volume control

DAC 32-bit/192kHz with Advanced AL32 Processing

File formats Up to 24-bit/192kHz on all inputs, DSD 2.8MHz/5.6MHz via USB

Accessories supplied Power supply, stand for vertical use

Dimensions (WxHxD) 17x5.7x18.2cm (including knob and terminals, horizontal), 11.4x17.5x18.2cm (vertical, with stand)

denon.co.uk

crystals for 44.1kHz and 48kHz are used to ensure incoming signals are clocked accurately at any sample frequency.

PERFORMANCE

Used with my MacBook Air laptop, the Denon offered plug and play operation – drivers will be needed for Windows computers – and was soon demonstrating

just what it could do, with a smooth, easy-going presentation of a wide range of music. It's not the most dramatic or hard-hitting sound you'll encounter, but the DA-300USB offers excellent weight and scale, allied to a reassuring sense of control and subtlety. That means it's able to bring out the subtle nuances of a recording, while at the same time avoiding any nasty hard edges or excessive brightness.

There's no glare to the sound here, but the Denon is fully able to deliver those subtle clues concerning the size and acoustic of a recording venue – at least, when they're present on the source recording.

The overall warmth of the sound of the Denon does ensure it remains listenable even with low-bitrate material, that AL32 processing seemingly doing its stuff in making internet radio rather more listenable than usual; however, fed with higher-quality content,

'Well into the Second Age of the DAC things are shaping up much the same as they did first time round'

at either CD quality or beyond, the Denon really shines, combining generosity of overall presentation with that fine detail resolution, making the most of any source, amplification and speakers to which it's connected.

True, for many users the size and flexibility of the Denon will mean it's ideally suited for use with a compact amplifier and speakers, or even an active speaker set, in a desktop set-up, but this little DAC is more than good enough to sit in a main 'big room' system, as an upgrade to existing digital sources or to bring the added benefit of a connection for a home computer music store.

What's more, it's an excellent headphone amplifier, too, as I found when trying it with my B&W P3 and Bang & Olufsen H6 headphones: the sound is big, rich and entirely involving.

Given its price, its simplicity and, above all, the sound it delivers, it's hard to do anything other than recommend the Denon DA-300USB without hesitation. **G**

● ESSAY

'If Pono can spread the word about high-quality music on the move, it will have done its job'

Is the music revolution less revolutionary than promised? By adhering to current standards, it can only help everyone

There was a bit of an 'is that it?' reaction to the final announcement of Pono, the digital audio system long promoted by musician Neil Young, now due to go on sale this autumn. Ever since he first revealed the project, Young had been hinting at something unique and revolutionary, designed to seize back the idea of audio quality, not just compression for the sake of cramming maximum content into minimum space, leading to plenty of speculation about what exactly Pono would offer.

All we knew before the launch was that Pono would be an end-to-end system, encompassing mastering, music purchase and download, and a dedicated Pono Player designed for this breakthrough. Young showed the player on TV in the States, we all made references to a certain triangular chocolate bar, British audio company Meridian put out a release showing Young visiting its factory, and everything seemed ready to go.

Except...when the actual Pono announcement was made, along with a Kickstarter funding site achieving its target within a very short time, the player was the same but the audio partner was now Colorado-based Ayre Acoustics rather than Meridian, and the player itself was based not around some proprietary audio format, as speculation had suggested, but the same FLAC used by most high-resolution download sites already in operation. In fact, the Pono Player, when it goes on sale in October at around \$400, will be able to play not just FLAC but also the very MP3 files Young has referenced as the source of his dissatisfaction with the current state of portable digital music.

Young has said: 'What we decided to do was come out with a new system that was not a format, had no rules, respected the



The much-vaunted Pono music player may not be quite as innovative as was at first suggested but its compatibility with open-source FLAC files can't help but promote interest in high-resolution music

'The best thing Pono can do for the audio industry is spread the idea that there is life beyond the iPod'

arc, respected what the artist was trying to do and did everything that it could to give you what the artist gave, so that you get to feel not just what the artist intended you to feel, but actually what the artist did. And that is what Pono is. Pono plays back whatever the artist decided to do or the artist's producer decided to do.'

What's more, he sees the new player as the means to revive the audio industry. 'All those big things that you had to give away or put in the garage, they can come back now. All those stereo stores that had to close because there's no reason for big speakers anymore because people listen to little things that look like lozenges?

Because those are the new sound? How cool they could be? You can put it right on the kitchen table next to the toaster and it sounds exactly like an MP3. Now maybe those stores will start to open up again.'

With such lofty ambitions, you can understand the 'is that it?' reaction to what is basically a simple portable player, with 128GB of memory and the ability to play files of up to 24-bit/192kHz resolution, to be made in China once it goes into mass production.

Yes, it has both headphone and line-out sockets, but then so does a player such as the Fiio X3, which has a similar specification and can be bought for around £120 – against the £190 or so a Pono Player will cost you if you pre-order now. But such comparisons are missing the point. With mainstream artists such as Young himself, David Crosby, Sting, Jack White, Beck, Eddie Vedder, Arcade Fire, Gillian Welch, Norah Jones and more onboard and promoting the Pono concept on the grounds of sound quality, not Apple-style 'how cool is that?' tricks, it makes perfect sense to have the player conform to popular standards and reap the benefits of the halo effect those endorsements will bring.

The best thing Pono can now do for the audio industry as a whole is spread the idea that there is life – and, more to the point, sound quality – beyond the ubiquitous iPod/iPhone/iPad, and encourage more listeners to explore that world. The smartphone companies are already aware of this and are moving their upmarket products ahead of Apple's with 24-bit/192kHz FLAC capability.

Maybe when such products become widely used, perhaps the mass music market will stop engineering for 'lowest common denominator' sound, designed to be played on cheap radios and budget headphones, and return to an era when audio quality is paramount. We're lucky that the so-called 'loudness wars' haven't yet started to impact on the classical market as they have wrecked many a popular release. With the rise of higher-quality players for all, perhaps the threat can be seen off once and for all. ⑥




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Grand claims

I read with interest Peter Quanttrill's feature on Julian Anderson (April, page 96), yet I found some of Anderson's carefully considered underlying principles for his works understandable, others incomprehensible. However, I also feel there is a certain 'dumbing-down' to his listeners when, having softened them with these highly technical thought processes, and summarising the rationale for his recent opera, he describes 'the relationship between the orchestra and what's on stage' as 'the main polarity of this opera'. Well yes, but unless I'm very much mistaken, this isn't a 'Eureka' moment of discovery specific to Anderson's work at this moment in the history of music. Just ask Monteverdi, Handel, Wagner or Richard Strauss...

Barry Borman, *Middlesex*

Critical style

I have been a *Gramophone* reader since the mid-1950s. Now, after some 60 years, there are certain fragments of delicious word usage that remain with me. I recall Philip Hope-Wallace reviewing the *Die Frau ohne Schatten* conducted by Karl Böhm (6/56). He said that although £10 might seem rather a lot to spend 'how can one price beauty by the hour?' Or of Callas on her first *Traviata* recording (1/58) 'she has the extraordinary gift of vocal suggestion, to colour her voice to imply all the irony of the part; where Violetta must pretend (so often the point) to be cheerful, pretend to be recovered when the wing of death has already stroked her.'

Charles Boardman, *Nottingham*

Wish lists

Reading your Letter of the Month ('Imagined recordings', April, Page 147) reminded me of how much I lament the wonderful performances that missed being preserved for posterity. Here are my desires for Beecham, Heifitz and Horowitz...

Why did no one record Beecham's performance of Sibelius's Symphony No 5? Also, Beecham is on record concerning his dislike for Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral* Symphony, which I understand, but why is there no *London Symphony* by Beecham – it would have soared!

Letter of the Month

Organ renaissance



Cameron Carpenter: Jeremy Nicholas interview

Thank you Jeremy Nicholas for the fascinating article on the resurgence of interest in the pipe organ (May, page 19). Interesting that in the same issue there is also a photo of his fellow contributor, Marc Rochester, at what appears to be the organ of the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas in Kuala Lumpur (page 3). For many years, until the concert hall management pulled the

plug in 2011, Dr Rochester presented a monthly series of organ recitals in Kuala Lumpur which attracted literally hundreds of audiences. Queues formed hours before each recital with people frequently turned away at the door due to lack of space.

There had never been organ recitals in Malaysia before, and as the Kuala Lumpur organ was the only one in the country, there was no established audience for the instrument. I well remember a wonderful performance of the Rheinberger Suite for violin, cello and organ and another of the Saint-Saëns Fantasy for Violin, Harp and Organ. What drew in the crowds was Rochester's fun-filled presentations, peppered with hilarious anecdotes and self-deprecating comments.

Victor Ho, *Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the July issue by May 27. Gramophone reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

**PRESTO
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Heifitz commissioned Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto, of which several Heifitz performances exist. Conspicuous among the many violin concertos which he could have recorded but didn't is the gloriously beautiful First Violin Concerto. How can this have happened?

Horowitz became famous at the beginning of his career by making the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto famous as well. In that time it was the Second Piano Concerto that everybody played. It is a better work. How come he never recorded it? It would have equalled the First in its sizzle and dash.

Shortly after Rachmaninov completed his *Symphonic Dances* he and Horowitz got together in a private studio in Hollywood and played the two piano version of the *Symphonic Dances*. Two of the greatest pianists of the 20th century playing anything would be self-recommending. But this session would be one for the ages.

Maybe there still is a Beecham Sibelius Fifth or a *London* somewhere. It would be welcome at the very least, even in poor sound. Maybe Heifitz played the Prokofiev First in NYC in the 1930s and maybe Horowitz did the Tchaikovsky also in NY in the '30s. One can only hope.

Ben Cutler, *via email*

Your Letter of the Month on 'Imagined recordings' reminded me of my own list of recordings that I wish had been made.

I read that Prokofiev conducted the first performance of his Fifth Symphony, shortly before he ceased conducting on his doctor's advice. I wish that someone had recorded that performance.

As well, I wish that Wilhelm Furtwängler had recorded one or more of the symphonies of Gustav Mahler, whose music he could not perform during most of his career, due to the Nazi racial laws.

Edwin R Kammin, *Toronto, Ontario*

Organ reprise

Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed reading Jeremy Nicholas's article 'Organ Renaissance' (May, page 18), I can't help mistrusting the motives of Cameron Carpenter somewhat. Having heard him play on more than one occasion I would say there is no doubt that he has what so many organists lack – a prodigious technique bordering on genius. What he doesn't have is empathy with, or even in some cases, respect for the music he is playing. Listening to him as soloist in Poulenc's Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani (one of my favourite pieces in the repertoire) on BBC Radio 3 recently, I would say his unbalanced registrations and misplaced improvisatory passages showed a complete lack of understanding as to what the composer was trying to achieve and merely a desire to stamp his own mark all over the performance. Indeed, he should have listened to Maurice Durufle's monumental recording for EMI which, for all its issues with organ tuning, still knocks the socks off anything else available.

If we want to continue the exciting renaissance the organ is undergoing at the moment I believe we need to go to grass roots to do it. Make our organs more available for people to try. Take a leaf out of Daniel Roth's book and open the organ loft up to let people see the organist at work. Most importantly, make it easier for children to learn the organ. As a hugely interested youngster I was forever thwarted in my attempts to start learning the instrument and had to wait until I was an adult to begin a journey that has ultimately proved so rewarding.

Richard Naijff-Mackie, Brighton, UK

Editorial notes

Regarding 'Britten the Performer' (May, page 96), Rob Cowan would like to thank Britten discographer Philip Stuart for pointing out that the performance of Delius's *Summer Night on the River* (June 2, 1967) was first released as part of the '25 Years at the Aldeburgh Festival' special album (Decca, 5BB119-20). The BBC Legends version Rob referred to is from two days later. Also, the 1963 Mozart Symphony No 40 is with the LSO not the ECO. Philip writes that neither he nor Decca were able to establish why Britten did not approve their release, as there seems to be no reference in the surviving correspondence.

AKG Images provided the cover image of CPE Bach for our May issue.

OBITUARIES

A great British baritone;
the founder of Lyrta

JOHN SHIRLEY-QUIRK



(Left) John Shirley-Quirk with (right) Peter Pears

Baritone

August 28, 1931 – April 7, 2014

Liverpool-born, Shirley-Quirk started his musical life playing the violin. It was as a student at Liverpool University, where he read chemistry and physics, that he started to study singing and worked with Austen Carnegie (he would also go on to study with Roy Henderson).

He sang as a Vicar Choral at St Paul's Cathedral and at the same time made his Glyndebourne debut as the Doctor in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. As a member of the English Opera Group between 1964 and 1976 he worked closely with Britten. Among the Britten works he created were *Canticle IV*, *Journey of the Magi*, and the multiple baritone roles in *Death in Venice* (both recorded for Decca). He would also create the role of Lev in Sir Michael Tippett's *The Ice Break*.

He recorded extensively, highlights include the Solti Mahler Eighth (Decca), Britten's own recordings of *Peter Grimes* (as Mr Redburn – Decca) and *Curlew River* (Ferryman – Decca) and Britten's recordings of Bach's *St John Passion* and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* (Decca). He was awarded the CBE in 1975 and latterly taught at Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory of Music.

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JULY 2014



BBC Proms Special Issue

Philip Clark explores one of this year's major Proms themes – music from the First World War – focusing on Vaughan Williams, Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Butterworth and Moeran; James Jolly interviews Sir Neville Marriner as he celebrates his 90th birthday year with a special Proms performance.

Tippett's A Child of Our Time

Geraint Lewis surveys the available recordings of Tippett's dramatic pacifist oratorio.

Maxwell Davies

Arnold Whittall profiles the Master of the Queen's Music

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John Studzinski

The arts patron and banker on the glories of the English liturgical music tradition and the work of his Genesis Foundation

Growing up in Boston with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the winter and Tanglewood in the summer, music was always just there. You also couldn't grow up in America in the 1960s and '70s without being influenced by music. Leonard Bernstein really understood the need to bring young people in as a new audience, and not just assume that everyone knew about Bach or understood Mozart's three great operas. He assumed very little knowledge, but wanted to make everyone feel that they could have enough confidence to access the symphony orchestra and the concert.

If you're raised as part of a religious family, you're obviously going to be used to the role of liturgical music. When Archbishop Nichols became a cardinal, I organised for Westminster Cathedral Choir to go to the Vatican to sing in St Peter's; it totally changed the view in the Vatican about the English liturgical music tradition. Choirs such as those from Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey are so much better than anything in any other place in the world, but we take them for granted in this country. When you drop them into St Peter's Basilica, into a grand papal Mass, and they can hold their own and then some, with this extraordinarily powerful spiritual anchoring and integrity and dignity, you know the English really understand the role of music in liturgy and worship.

Earlier in my life I had the benefit of knowing Solti well, and I also knew Bernstein and met Karajan. And once I was present when all three were together, after a lunch. They had a score of Beethoven's Ninth and were focusing on the fourth movement, with the original markings from the first time it was performed. Of course, whenever you were in Karajan's presence you did nothing but shut your mouth because he really had a very austere authoritarian presence, whereas Lenny was completely informal and hugging everybody, and Solti was very matter of fact in his constructive Hungarian way. Karajan was talking about playing it slow-paced, almost funereally, slowly picking up the tempi, but being moderate, almost contemplative and somewhat uncertain of the outcome. The other extreme was Bernstein, who was playing it as great fireworks, a triumphant piece. And Solti was thinking of it more from the standpoint of a dignified, constructive resolution about hope for humanity, how you had to build up to it in a very strong way, and get there and reaffirm it. I was about 20 then. It was when I realised that no two interpretations of music could ever be the same.

I was in Salzburg at a performance of Rossini's *Stabat mater* with Plácido Domingo and Anna Netrebko, and I've never got so annoyed in my life. I was thinking – what is going on in this music? There's not one element of devotion, faith, hope or humanity. This is all chocolate box stuff. What was Rossini



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doing producing a *Stabat mater*? Of course, almost every great composer has done a version of *Stabat mater* – either five minutes, 10 minutes or even 60 minutes long. Which is why the Genesis Foundation has commissioned one from James MacMillan, who's also mentor for the composers of what I'm calling the 'sorrows' – three shorter *Stabat maters* at 10 minutes each. It became very clear that we hadn't had, since Szymanowski and Poulenc, a major *Stabat mater* in decades.

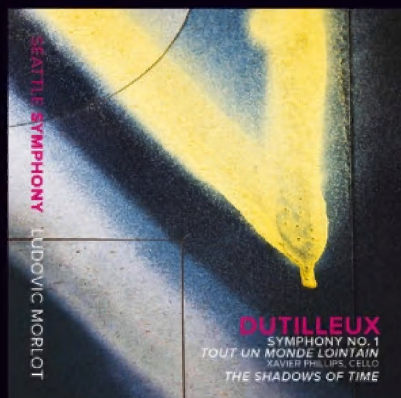
But when we think of the *Stabat mater*, even though we understand the pietà and we understand Mary standing at the foot of the cross as strongly Christian iconography, the reality is that there couldn't be a more contemporary image. Think of mothers picking up their dying children in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq or Ukraine, or following the Arab Spring, of this relationship between the mother and the child, of a child doing something they're passionate about and devoted to and dedicated to for a bigger purpose, a movement – and how the mother reacts to the child's death or sacrifice. It's a powerful text. **G**

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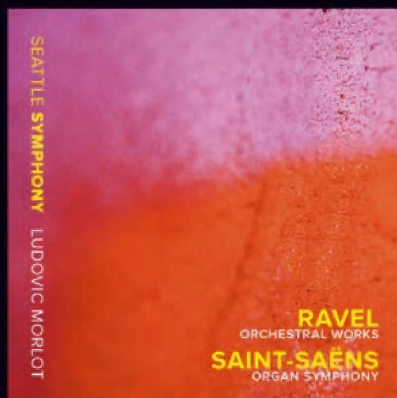
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